DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 883 EA 020 518

AUTHOR	Amundson, Kristen J.
TITLE	First Teachers: Parental Involvement in the Public Schools.
INSTITUTION	National School Boards Association, Alexandria, VA.
PUB DATE	Nov 88
NOTE	57p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Research and Information Services Dept., National School Boards Association, 1680 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 ($15.00).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Board of Education Policy; *Boards of Education; *Educational Policy; Educational Research; Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Public Schools; School Demography; Socioeconomic Influences

ABSTRACT

Drawing on current research and practice, this monograph is designed to help school boards deal with the important question of parent involvement. The first of five chapters examines the benefits of parent involvement in education. Next, the current demographic and societal trends that make involving parents more difficult than previously are explored. Then, barriers to parent involvement are discussed, including educational practices that may discourage effective involvement. Six successful parent involvement programs around the country are then profiled. Finally, the policy implications for local school boards are discussed. Appended are (1) a list of resources for school board members; (2) a sample policy checklist; and (3) descriptions of sample policies. (SI)

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First Teachers: Parental Involvement In The Public Schools

November 1988

FOREWORD

The importance of parent involvement in children's achievement in school cannot be overstated. Before a child ever sets foot in a classroom, parents—the first teachers—lay the groundwork for subsequent achievement by their children. A positive learning environment at home and high parental expectations can make the difference between a student who excels throughout the school years and one who performs at mediocre levels or doesn't perform at all.

There is much discussion today about societal and demographic changes in American society and the need for our public education system to respond accordingly. Just as the student population is changing, so are the families from whence they come: more non-English speaking Americans, more working parents, more single-parent households. With these changes have come barriers to traditional parent-school interaction.

One fact remains constant, however: parents continue to want the best for their children, whatever their national or ethnic origin, language or socioeconomic status. By building on this fundamental desire, schools can accrue enormous benefits to themselves and their constituencies. No single program model exists for ensuring the most effective school-parent partnerships; they can be as varied as the human fabric that comprises our country.

Involved parents are more satisfied, more supportive and more willing to work for their schools. Public education can ill afford to lose this valuable resource. It is NSBA's hope that the information provided in this monograph will stimulate local school boards to design and implement parent involvement programs that fit their unique circumstances and best serve their communities.

Very truly yours,

Leonard Rovins
President

Thomas A. Shannon
Executive Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

The Benefits of Parental Involvement 2
Benefits for students 2
Benefits for parents 5
History of parent involvement in America's schools 6-7
Benefits for the schools 8
Implications for school boards 10

Why Parents Aren't Involved 12
Demographic changes in school populations 12
- Students and families "at-risk" 12
- Children from single-parent families 13
- Families whose native language is not English 14
- Children of the "baby echo" 14

Implications for school boards 15
Increasing numbers of working parents 15
Implications for school boards 19
Lack of awareness of parents' role 19
Implications for school boards 20
Educational practices that serve as barriers 21
Implications for school boards 22

Models For Parent Involvement 23
Basic responsibilities of parents 23
Basic responsibilities of schools 23
Models for parent involvement
- Volunteer programs 24
- At-home learning 24
- Parent advocacy programs 24
- Parent education 25
- Governance 25

Implications for school boards 26

Successful Parent Involvement Programs 27
Programs that help parents meet basic obligations
- Matteson, Illinois 27
- Nutley, New Jersey 27

Effective school communications programs
- Indianapolis, Indiana 28
- Wisconsin's Year of the Family in Education 29

Involving parents as volunteers
- Positive Parents of Dallas 29

Involving parents in home learning
- Dade Partners, Miami 30

Parents as advocates
- APPLE Corps, Atlanta 30

Parents involved in governance
- South Carolina's School Improvement Councils 32

Implications For School Board Policy 33

Appendix 35
Appendix A — Resources for School Board Members
Appendix B — Sample Policy Checklist
Appendix C — Sample Policies

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, the history of American education is the history of the relationship between the school and the family. From the time when the Puritans established the first compulsory education law (which required education, although not necessarily schooling) to today's debates over textbooks and curriculum selection, parents have been deeply involved in the education of their children.

There is now overwhelming evidence that parents' active participation in their children's education benefits both children and the schools. The most significant of these are improved student achievement and increased public support for education.

But today there is renewed discussion about parental involvement. On the one hand, there seem to be a variety of demographic and societal pressures that are limiting parents' ability to participate actively in their children's education. On the other hand, there are other groups of parents with specific agendas and strong beliefs—about educating handicapped children or the role of religion and values in the curriculum, for example—who are becoming increasingly sophisticated and politically active in pressing their demands on local school districts.

This monograph is designed to help school boards deal with the important question of parent involvement. It draws on current research and practice to discuss the most important issues related to parent involvement.

The monograph will

- examine the benefits of parent involvement in education
- explore the current demographic and societal trends that make parent involvement more difficult than previously
- discuss barriers, including educational practices that may discourage effective parental involvement
- profile existing effective programs
- discuss the policy implications for local school boards. ■

THE BENEFITS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

When *Instructor* magazine polled more than 8,500 teachers and asked them the one thing they would like to tell national policymakers about the most effective way to raise student achievement, the answer given most frequently was "more parental involvement." The teachers polled felt that parental involvement was more important than smaller class size, more important than increased control and power for teachers, more important than promoting student responsibility, and more important than decreasing time students spend watching television.

Research conducted by Johns Hopkins University professor Joyce Epstein supports the *Instructor* poll. In a 1984 hearing of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, Epstein testified:

> If teachers had to choose only one policy to stress, these results suggest that the most payoff for the most parents and students will come from teachers involving parents in helping their children in learning activities at home.

There is a considerable research base that supports the teachers' emphasis on the importance of parental involvement in education. In fact, researchers have demonstrated that parental involvement produces significant benefits for students, parents, and schools.

In *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parental Involvement Improves Student Achievement*, Anne T. Henderson summarized nearly 50 studies of parental involvement. She concluded:

> Programs designed with strong parent involvement produce students who perform better than otherwise identical programs that do not involve parents as thoroughly, or that do not involve them at all. Schools that relate well to their communities have student bodies that outperform other schools. Children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are called in to help.

This chapter summarizes more than 20 years of research on the effects of parent involvement in schools. It outlines the consistent benefits those studies have found parental involvement produces for students, parents, and schools.

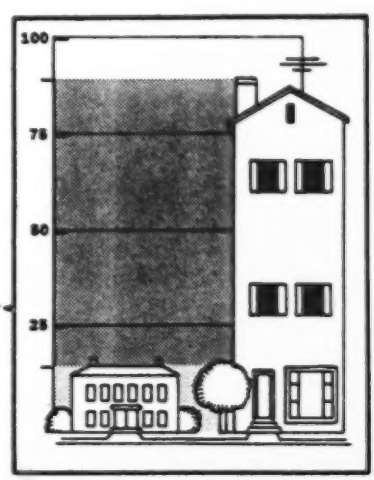
Benefits for Students

The first large-scale study of the factors that lead to student achievement was James Coleman's massive research effort conducted for the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. *Equality of Educational Opportunity* did not set out to explore the relationship between parent involvement and student performance. Nonetheless, the results of the study showed that there was a stronger correlation between student achievement and family background than between achievement and "school quality." This report, said Dorothy Rich of the Home and School Institute (HSI), "was widely interpreted to mean that 'schools don't count; it's the family that counts.' This is an oversimplification," she noted, but added that the report "did help to underscore that what children bring to school—background and environment—is critically important in the learning process."

After Coleman, a number of researchers explicitly set out to determine the effects of parent involvement on their children's educational achievement. In hundreds of studies, conducted in large and small communities, with very young children and with teenagers, with poor and affluent students, the results are clear: parent involvement raises student achievement.

Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. During the first 18 years of life, children spend only about 13 percent of their waking hours in school and 87 percent of their waking time under the control of their families.

One very important type of parent involvement takes place before a child ever sets foot in a school.



By creating a positive learning environment at home, and establishing high expectations for their children, parents lay the groundwork for subsequent achievement in school.

In a National Institute of Education (NIE) funded study, *Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice*, Rhoda McShane Becher cites eight different studies that confirm the importance of parental aspirations in motivating students to succeed. She concluded:

> Children with higher scores on measures of achievement, competence, and intelligence had parents who held higher educational expectations and aspirations for them than did parents of children who did not score as high. Parents of the former children also exerted more pressure for achievement, provided more academic guidance, and exhibited a higher level of general interest in their children.

One of the most striking confirmations of the importance of parent expectations is Benjamin Bloom's *Developing Talent In Young People*. Bloom's team of researchers studied people who had reached "world-class levels of accomplishment" in a number of talent fields: pianists, sculptors, swimmers, tennis players, research mathematicians, and research neurologists. All swimmers, for example, had earned a place on an Olympic swimming team in a sprint event; sculptors had won both a Guggenheim Fellowship and an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

In interviews with these high achievers, the researchers found over and over again the importance of the *home environment* on the development of talent. Except in a few rare instances, the individuals in the study were not given their first instruction in the field in which they were eventually to excel because the parents saw in them any unusual gifts that needed to be developed. "They were given the initial instruction and encouragement to learn because their parents placed very high value on one of the talent areas—music and the arts, sports, or intellectual activities."

The families did share a number of characteristics. These included:

- parents who were hardworking and active
- an emphasis on doing one's best—whatever the task
- a belief that everyone, including children, should make a productive use of time and establish priorities ("work comes before play")
- an emphasis on self-discipline.

Bloom's earlier research, as well as this study, led him to believe that these talented individuals reached their level of accomplishment less because of innate and rare qualities than because of the training and encouragement they received from families and teachers. In fact, in the conclusion of the book Bloom speculated that "if the talented individuals we studied had been reared in a very different home environment. . . it is not likely that they would have reached the level or type of talent development [they did]."

Parents with high educational aspirations for their children are more likely to provide developmental experiences before the children ever arrive at the schoolhouse door. The effects of this early stimulation can last for years. Barry Guinagh and Ira Gordon examined the effects of a program that taught low-income parents a number of developmental activities to try with their children. Children were enrolled in the program for no more than three years; no child was seen beyond the age of three. Yet Guinagh and Gordon found that significant improvements in student achievement and performance were still present up to six years after the program ended.

The family is critical to success in school. Indeed, the "curriculum of the home" is twice as predictive of academic learning as family socioeconomic status. . . .[and] parental influence is no less important in the high school years.

What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning
U.S. Department of Education

By showing an interest in their children's learning and by holding high expectations for their children, parents can help develop attitudes that are important factors in school success. When the U.S. Department summarized research on the effects of parental attitudes on student learning, it noted:

> The family is critical to success in school. Indeed, the 'curriculum of the home' is twice as predictive of academic learning as family socioeconomic status. This curriculum involves informed parent-child conversations about everyday events, encouragement and discussion of leisure reading, monitoring and joint analysis of television viewing and peer activities, deferral of immediate gratifications to accomplish long-term goals, expressions of affection, interest in the child's academic and other progress as a person, and perhaps, among such unremitting efforts, occasional doses of caprice and serendipity. The evidence suggests that parental influence is no less important in the high school years.

Once children are enrolled in school, parents have a number of additional ways they can participate in their education. One of the most effective is to work with their children to reinforce lessons learned at school. Distinguished educator Ralph W. Tyler has noted that if the only reading young people are ever required to do is during school hours, their reading skills will not reach mature levels. If their writing outside of school is limited to an occasional letter, writing skills will remain rudimentary. For optimal education to take place, skills need to be taught and practiced at home and at school.

This is especially true for students whose background would place them "at risk" of failing or falling behind in school. A number of studies have found that parents can play an important role in helping these "at risk" students succeed.

One comprehensive study of supplementary home instruction took place in Boulder Valley, Colorado. All entering kindergartners who functioned below the 25th percentile on three or more tests of ability and development received a personalized learning program for part of the school day. In addition, a randomly selected group of children also received an at-home, parent-directed learning activities program focused on their particular needs. Both groups of children scored in the normal range at the end of kindergarten. But at the beginning of their first grade year, only the students who had received home instruction to supplement their schoolwork had maintained the gains.

There are other ways that parents can contribute to their children's achievement. Herbert Walberg has reviewed more than 2,500 studies of what he calls "educational productivity." His research indicates a number of specific steps parents can take to improve student achievement. These include:

- providing books and a place for studying
- observing routines for meals, bedtime, and homework
- monitoring the amount of time spent watching TV
- limiting the hours for after-school jobs
- discussing school events
- helping students meet deadlines.

This parent involvement helps both individual students and the overall student body achieve at a higher level than might otherwise be expected.

The problem with many studies of parent involvement is that they have not carefully screened out the effects of socio-economic status (SES). In general, the higher the family SES, the greater is the probability that the parents will participate in school affairs. But at least one major study has carefully worked to isolate the independent effects of parent income and parent involvement.

R.J. Gigliotti and W.B. Brookover studied schools with similar size, geographic locale, and student SES. They found that *parent participation* was a critical factor in determining the overall effectiveness of schools—regardless of the income level of the parents.

HSI has developed a number of projects targeted to low income families. Project AHEAD serves 5000 primarily black and Hispanic children in Los Angeles through a parent-to-parent learning program. Results, said HSI director Rich, "show significant increases in scores in second and third grade CTBS tests."

It is important to note that parents must be involved with learning activities for parent involvement to lead to significant achievement gains for students. A study by Jean Wellisch and others of Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) schools found that when parent involvement in the classroom "as aides, visitors, and as volunteers" was high, both reading and math achievement levels increased significantly. The study noted two important conditions for the gains:

- Involvement in the classroom, rather than the school in general, is related to academic success.
- Parent involvement specifically, not the use of instructional aides in general, is associated with school success.

Figure 1-1 summarizes the results. When parent involvement in the classroom was ranked as "high," 81.8 percent of students showed high math achievement. When parent involvement was low, only 38.5 percent of students demonstrated high achievement in math. Similarly, in classrooms with high levels of parent involvement, approximately twice as many students (54.5 percent vs. 23.1 percent) showed high reading achievement as when parent involvement was low.

In the Wellisch study, parent involvement was ranked second in importance—just behind adequacy of instructional practice—in affecting gains in reading achievement. For math achievement, parent involvement ranked third, just behind the percentage of minority involvement and the costs for remedial specialists.

In an October 1987 article in *Phi Delta Kappan*, researchers Milbrey McLaughlin and Patrick Shields discussed the policy implications of involving low-income parents in the schools. They cited

> . . . strong evidence that low-income and poorly educated parents want to play a role in their children's education. Conventional wisdom to the contrary, parents who lack knowledge themselves do not necessarily lack interest in the schools their children attend. What's lacking, in most schools and school districts, are appropriate strategies or structures for involving low-income parents.

Given the changing student population and the increasing numbers of low-income students expected to enter the public schools in the coming years, it is imperative that school policies more effectively find ways to involve all parents, McLaughlin and Shields argue. They note three strategies that seem to be most effective in involving low-income parents. First, school administrators and teachers—not parents—must take the initiative for reaching out. Second, parent-involvement activities must be scheduled "for the convenience of parents," not schools. Finally, programs must respond to "local political realities" instead of state and federal regulations.

Most of the research studies discussed in this chapter involve a number of different methods of parent involvement. Research has not identified the "best" form of parent involvement. Rather, evidence seems to suggest

1) Programs that had more parent involvement also had higher student achievement.

2) One kind of parent involvement leads to another. For example, programs that had greater parental involvement in decision-making also had more parents involved as tutors and volunteers.

Chapter IV discusses a number of different modes of parent involvement.

Benefits for Parents

Many of the first studies of parent involvement looked at compensatory education programs, such as Head Start and ESAA. A number of these studies found that parents who became involved with their children's education also became more actively involved in community activities than they had before.

Perhaps as a result, these involved parents increased their own self-confidence, developed a more positive self-image, and enrolled in a number of programs. A MIDCO Associates study of Head Start programs found that parents who were heavily involved in the Head Start program "appeared more satisfied, showed more self-confidence, had greater sense of internal locus of control, and greater assurance about their future."

Urie Bronfenbrenner, whose research was

FIGURE 1-1

Parent Involvement and Student Achievement in ESAA Schools

Math Achievement

Parent Involvement in the Classroom	High	Low	
	81.8%	18.2%	High
	38.5%	54.2%	Low

Reading Achievement

Parent Involvement in the Classroom	High	Low	
	54.5%	45.5%	High
	23.1%	54.2%	Low

SOURCE: Jean Wellisch and others, "An In-Depth Study of Emergency School Aid Act Schools: 1974-75, Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1976.

The History of Parent Involvement in America's Public Schools

From the Puritans to the modern day, Americans have believed that families have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. Out of that belief, the strong tradition of local control for education has developed.

One overriding observation must color any discussion of family-school relations throughout our nation's history: Americans have, since our earliest days on this continent, always expected a great deal from our schools. "In other countries when there is a profound social problem, there is an uprising," educational historian Lawrence Cremin once observed. "In the United States, we organize a course."

To the Puritans, education was essential for church membership. Children must learn to read so they could gain the knowledge of the Bible that was a requirement for personal salvation.

At the same time, however, education was viewed as a family responsibility. The family, noted Ralph Tyler, was responsible "for teaching the child how to make a living, to respect and obey constituted authority, to participate in community tasks, and to perform his/her religious duties."

The first compulsory education law passed in America, adopted by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1642, reflected this attitude. The law made no mention of schooling. Rather, it required parents to educate their children in reading, the catechism, and in "some honest lawful calling, labor, or employment (sic)."

Five years later, however, the Colony passed Ye Old Deluder Satan act. It established the right of the state, acting as an agent of the church, to require compulsory schooling for the young. The law required that every community of 50 householders employ a teacher of reading and writing.

> it is furthr ordered yt where any towne shall increase to ye numbr of 100 families or householdrs, they shall set up a grammar schoole, ye mr therefore being able to instruct youth so farr as they shall be fited for ye university, provided yt if any towne neglect ye performance hereof above one yeare, yt every such towne shall pay 5 £ to ye next schoole till they shall performe this order.

Enforcement of the laws of 1642 and 1647 was left in the hands of the town selectmen. These governing boards became the first lay representatives to be charged with management of the nation's schools.

Many educational historians have noted that these two laws establish what Ellwood Cubberley called "the very foundation stones upon which our American public school systems have later been constructed."

Eventually, the complexity of overseeing the schools on a day-to-day basis led town selectmen to appoint special committees of citizens to be responsible for the schools. In 1721, the Boston selectmen nominated a permanent school committee. And in 1789, Boston passed its own school law that provided for a creation of a separate school committee of twelve members to be elected by the people.

As settlers moved west, the basic educational organization established in New England became the norm. The Northwest Ordinance provided a mechanism for financing education in the Northwest Territories, and declared that "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." But it did not specify an organization for school governance. Keith Goldhammer noted in *The School Board* that the practice of establishing school boards

> appealed [to the settlers'] spirit of independence and desire to manage their own affairs apart from the dictates of a central governmental authority. It also appealed to them as a rational answer to the complex problem of administering a broadly diffused educational system in each of the immense western states. The local school district and the local school board were ready-made devices for constituting educational authorities to attend to the state's responsibility for the education of its children in each hamlet as well as in its metropolitan centers.

A second great achievement for public education in America was the role the schools played in helping the society absorb the huge numbers of immigrants who arrived during the mid-nineteenth century. Proponents of universal compulsory education, said the Carnegie Council on Children in *All Our Children*, claimed that schools could do "what families were failing or unable to do: teach good work habits, pass on essential skills, form good character, and in short, Americanize."

One of the conflicts between family values and school policy came over the practice of Bible reading. Horace Mann, secretary to the Massachusetts Board of Education, established the policy of reading ten verses from the King James version of the Bible "without comment" each morning before the school day began. To Mann, the Bible reading was a way to help students develop both "reason and religious conscience."

As schools enrolled increasing numbers of non-Protestants, however, parents sought ways to eliminate a practice they saw as religious indoctrination from the schools. They demanded greater parental control over what their children were being taught in school. In

Continued on next page

Cincinnati, the conflict actually erupted into violence—and became known the "Rifle War."

Massive social changes were partly responsible for another major challenge that confronted the schools: the move towards universal literacy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ralph Tyler noted, nearly 60 percent of the U.S. labor force was engaged in agriculture. For many Americans, only minimal literacy was required; in 1918, approximately two-thirds of Americans were not considered literate. Most schools were small and rural. The school calendar—typically 135 days long—was designed to accommodate families' needs for their children's help during planting and harvest. Although many states had passed compulsory attendance laws, they were not strictly enforced; in 1890 only 44 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 17 were enrolled in public schools.

Changes in the labor force provided one stimulus toward the goal of universal literacy. By 1900, the percentage of the labor force engaged in agriculture had dropped to 38 percent. More children were enrolled in school: 50 percent by 1910; 67 percent by 1930. Throughout this period, both families and the community at large played an important role in the education of a large number of children. As Tyler has noted, most children learned values such as truthfulness, honesty, industry, punctuality, and the importance of education at home. Even children who came from homes where those values were not emphasized were exposed to those values.

The goal of universal literacy has not been reached, but schools have made major progress toward it. The 1984 National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that about 99 percent of 17-year-olds were able to read at a basic level and understand sequential material.

For some parents, however, the move toward compulsory education created a conflict with deeply held values. In a landmark Supreme Court case, the rights of parents to free exercise of their religion was upheld.

In *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the Supreme Court affirmed that "providing public schools ranks at the very apex of the functions of the state." Nonetheless, the Court noted that in this case, involving Old Order Amish families, compelling school attendance after the eighth grade could "gravely endanger if not destroy the free exercise" of their religious beliefs.

The Court emphasized that such protection applied only to claims "rooted in religious belief." The decision noted the parents had not objected to *all* education, only education past the eighth grade.

A third major social problem that dramatically affected the relationship between parents and the public schools was the nationwide effort to provide equal educational opportunities. During the 1960s, in part spurred on by the Brown decision and a number of major federal programs including the Emergency School Aid Act, schools launched a major effort to expand educational equity.

These efforts took many forms, but included massive desegregation programs, demands of increased parental involvement, and the creation of new programs such as Head Start. Kagan and Schraft have analyzed three distinct changes in parent participation during this time.

The first, they said, was confrontation. "Poor and minority parents, in the absence of school desegregation, stormed the schools demanding control." In the second mode, which developed partly in reaction to the first, schools attempted to involve parents in specific educational programs. These generally involved federally funded programs such as Title I.

A third mode of parent involvement was the creation of new institutions such as parent-run alternative schools. Most were short-lived institutions; there was little carryover to public school policy.

Other parents reacted to these massive changes in the public schools in quite a different way. Private school enrollment jumped. "White flight" from inner cities left many large city school systems with virtually all minority students.

Today, schools face other challenges from parents. Some fundamentalist parents, for example, are demanding increased control over curriculum matters. They charge that schools are systematically promoting the religion of "secular humanism."

In 1974, parents' frustration over what their children were being taught in school in Kanawha County, West Virginia, erupted into violence. Other parents have launched legal challenges to curriculum, on the basis of promotion of "secular humanism" in the schools.

To date, none of these challenges has been upheld in court. The *Mozert* decision, which held that parents could excuse their children from lessons that conflicted with their values, was overturned on appeal. A similar challenge in Alabama was also overturned on appeal.

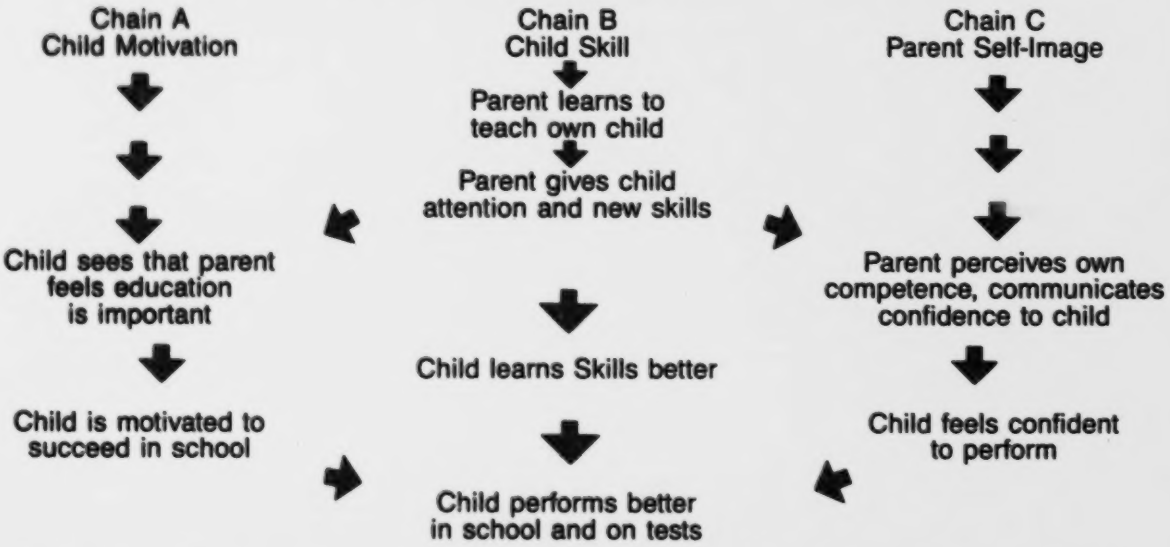
During the last ten years, other legislation has affected the relationship between parents and the schools. P.L. 94-142, for example, guaranteed parents the right to participate in planning their child's educational program. In Pennsylvania, a court upheld the inclusion of the gifted into such programs.

The preceding discussion should make two points stand out. First, conflicts between families and schools are clearly nothing new. From the time the Puritans established schools because they felt families were not meeting their responsibilities, there has always been a disagreement over the role of the school and the community in educating children.

Second, educational programs work best when they are supported by the family and the community. The major accomplishments in achieving literacy, for example, could not have been made without the involvement and commitment of parents and the community at large. ■

FIGURE 1-2

How Parent-Child Interaction Affects Student Achievement


Chain A
Child Motivation
Chain B
Child Skill
Chain C
Parent Self-Image
Parent learns to teach own child
Parent gives child attention and new skills
Child sees that parent feels education is important
Parent perceives own competence, communicates confidence to child
Child learns Skills better
Child is motivated to succeed in school
Child feels confident to perform
Child performs better in school and on tests

SOURCE: Mariam Sherman Stearns and Susan Peterson, "Parent Involvement in Compensatory Education Programs: Definitions and Findings," Menlo Park Educational Policy Research Center, Stanford Research Institute, 1973.

instrumental in designing the Head Start program, said

> One of the most important things we see happening is that not only do parents become more effective as parents, but they become more effective as people. It's a matter of higher self-esteem. Once they saw they could do something about their child's education, they saw they could also do something about housing, their community, and their jobs.

Reporting on parent involvement projects in low-income schools in New Haven, James Comer noted that many of the parents who participated in the program returned to school and finished their own education. As a result, many of these parents took jobs for which they would not have had "the confidence or the credentials before their participation in the program." Eventually, several left the welfare roles. "The children of these parents had models of school achievement to look up to, and they achieved themselves," Comer found.

This increase in parent confidence can in turn translate into still further student achievement gains. Researcher Miriam Stearns developed a diagram that illustrates the dynamics of parent-child interaction on children's achievement, shown in Figure 1-2.

Benefits for the Schools

The benefits to students and to parents are the most important outcomes of parent involvement programs. In addition, research has found that schools themselves benefit from parent involvement in a number of ways:

- involved parents develop more positive attitudes toward schools and school personnel
- involved parents help gather community support for the schools
- parent involvement brings additional resources that can benefit the schools
- teachers who participate in a parent involvement program improve their teaching
- teachers who report excellent parent-teacher relations take much greater satisfaction in their jobs
- parent involvement programs are a cost-effective way to increase student achievement

First, parents who are involved with schools develop more positive attitudes about school and school personnel than parents who did not become involved. This "familiarity breeds content" phenomenon is familiar in public education. For example, the Gallup Poll of Attitudes Toward Education has consistently found that the strongest

supporters of the public schools are public school parents. For example, in the 1988 poll, 39 percent of public school parents said they believed the public schools in their community had improved, compared with 36 percent of nonpublic school parents and 25 percent of those with no children in school. Similarly, 51 percent of public school parents give their local public schools a grade of A or B, compared with 33 percent of nonpublic school parents and 37 percent of those with no children in school.

Why do parent involvement programs lead to increased parent satisfaction? Joan Herman and Jennie Yeh's study, "Some Effects of Parent Involvement in Schools," theorized that by emphasizing the parents' role in education and actually transferring some responsibility for learning from the school to the parent, parent involvement "may help the school program be more sensitive to students' needs." Alternately, Herman and Yeh suggested, parent involvement "may give parents a greater stake in being satisfied, i.e., they share the blame for the source of the dissatisfaction."

Second, parent involvement programs often develop a solid group of school supporters who will in turn help gather community support for the school and its programs. Studies by Armer, Bowles, and Filipczak confirmed that parent involvement can enlist community support. This "ripple effect" can lead to a number of significant benefits for schools.

Parents United for Full Public School Funding was organized in the District of Columbia in 1980, when the school district faced a $60 million budget deficit—and the potential loss of 700 teachers. A public school parent who was also a school finance lawyer prepared detailed analyses of the budget. Other parents coordinated a rally at which more than 1,000 parents protested the budget cuts. As a result, $27 million was restored to the school budget.

Third, parent involvement brings additional resources to schools. Parents benefit the school directly through volunteering and raising money for school programs and projects. The National School Volunteer Program estimates that school volunteers provided schools with more than half a billion dollars in direct benefits in 1986-87. This kind of parent involvement includes traditional activities such as helping teachers in classrooms, with class trips, or parties; assisting administrators and teachers in the library, cafeteria, playground, computer lab, or other areas that require adult supervision; and working with the parent organization and school administration on fund-raising, community relations, and political awareness. Parent volunteers also have developed a number of other innovative ways to benefit their schools:

- In Belmont, Massachusetts, parents formed a consultation network to advise parents of children newly identified as having special needs. The parent group also has organized a curriculum fair for teachers and has developed information booklets for parents and teachers outlining resources, summer activities, and programs for children with special needs.
- At Jamestown Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, a program called Art Goes to School has been in place since 1982. Started by a parent who was an accomplished artist and maintained by a dedicated corps of parent volunteers, the program is designed to introduce students to great works of art. These monthly sessions, lasting about 30 minutes, guide students to make basic judgments about color, light, composition, texture, and perspective. One mother led second graders to decorate cookies in the bright colors and shapes they saw in a Kadinsky painting.
- In Dallas, Texas, a member of Positive Parents of Dallas who is also a media expert and professional writer conducts workshops for school principals and teachers on how to increase news coverage for their school.

Another benefit for schools is that parent involvement can actually improve teaching. Becher's research shows that teachers associated with parent-involvement efforts

- have become more proficient in their instructional and professional activities
- allocate more of their own time to instruction
- become more involved with the curriculum, and
- tend to experiment more.

In addition, Becher says, these teachers develop more student-oriented rather than text-oriented curricular activities. *The 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher* found that "teachers who enjoy excellent relations with parents are much less likely to have considered leaving teaching, and much less likely to think they will leave in the next five years." The study points to "compelling" evidence that links relations between home and school with the morale of the nation's teaching force. Figure 1-3 shows the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and their relationship with their students' families.

Finally, parent involvement is cost-effective. Parents have time to spend with children on a continuous basis, something classroom teachers may not always be able to do.

FIGURE 1-3

Teachers' Job Satisfaction Connected to Relations With Parents

	Ever Considered Leaving Teaching	Likely to Leave In Next 5 Years
Relations Between Parents and Teachers		
Those who say excellent	36%	13%
Those who say good	54%	23%
Those who say fair or poor	60%	28%
Satisfaction With Frequency of Contact With Parents		
Those who say very satisfied	41%	16%
Those who say somewhat satisfied	53%	24%
Those who are dissatisfied	68%	30%
Proportion of Parents Perceived as Uninterested in Their Child's Education		
Those who say most	67%	34%
Those who say many	58%	27%
Those who say some or hardly any	45%	17%
Job Satisfaction		
Those who say very satisfied	32%	10%
Those who say somewhat satisfied	60%	23%
Those who are dissatisfied	85%	53%
Total for All Teachers 1987	52%	22%

SOURCE: *The Metropolitan Life Survey of The American Teacher 1987: Strengthening Links Between Home and School.*

Researcher Gladys Burks conducted a study of HELP, a parent involvement program for low-income students in Benton Harbor, Michigan. She found that students enrolled in the HELP program, which cost $4.31 per student, demonstrated achievement gains equal to or exceeding those in Title I pull-out instruction, which cost $565 per student.

The Boulder Valley project involving kindergartners (previously referenced) also found that there were significant long-term benefits to parent involvement. When the students entered kindergarten, a district survey found that 5.6 percent exhibited the three most frequent types of learning disabilities. After two years of personalized learning involving their parents, only 2 percent of the students exhibited these learning disabilities. And only one child had been placed in a special education class.

The district was then spending $645.50 per kindergarten student and $1936.50 for each special education student at the elementary school level. As project personnel noted in the final report:

> [I]t does not take an accountant to see that if only 2% of the children end up needing special education help . . . and the remaining funds were spent to enhance the regular classroom program through small pupil-teacher ratios, staff development, additional paraprofessionals, assessment procedures, materials and equipment, and parent-teacher involvement, all teachers and pupils would benefit.

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Implications of the research on the importance of parent participation for school boards:

• Given the overwhelming evidence of the important role parents play in their children's education, school districts cannot afford to overlook this valuable resource.

• Carefully planned, consistent parent participation—especially with young children—can be both highly successful and cost-effective in reducing or eliminating a number of the causes for poor student performance in school.

• The goals for a parent involvement program will determine the type of involvement. For example, the most significant improvements in student achievement comes from programs that involve parents directly in learning activities with their own children.

• Parent involvement programs have successfully involved low-income parents, and have benefitted both students and the parents in these families. Schools need to make special attempts to reach out to all parents.

• To involve low-income parents most successfully, school districts must:

— take the initiative in reaching out to all parents
— schedule activities for the convenience of parents
— respond to local political realities instead of state and federal regulations.

• Parents can provide a variety of services to schools. Parent involvement programs should be carefully planned so they are inclusive, not exclusive.

• Finding ways to strengthen home-school links can be a valuable way to increase teacher morale and to retain qualified teachers. ■

WHY PARENTS AREN'T INVOLVED

The 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey of American Teachers, which focused on strengthening home-school links, asked parents of public school students a number of questions about the degree of parent participation in their own school. Most parents (55 percent of all parents, 63 percent of parents of high school students) agreed with the statement "Our school only contacts parents when there is a problem with their child." In addition, nearly a quarter—22 percent—agreed with the statement, "Our school does not give parents the opportunity for any meaningful roles."

Given the overwhelming evidence of the benefits of parental involvement, why isn't there more participation? A number of trends make it difficult for parents to be involved with their children's education. These include

- demographic changes in school populations
- increasing numbers of teenage parents
- increasing numbers of working parents
- lack of awareness of the vital role parents can play
- educational practices that discourage parent involvement.

Each of these factors by itself plays a role in discouraging parent participation. Together, they create barriers that discourage or prevent millions of parents from participating in the schools, reduce the talent and commitment available to the schools for improving instruction and—certainly most serious—limit educational achievement for some children who may need help the most. This chapter will discuss these barriers to parent participation.

Demographic Changes in School Populations

The families who send children to school today are very different from the parents who sent children to school a generation ago. Demographic changes that are affecting the entire fabric of American society are being seen first— and probably most dramatically—in the schools.

Sharon Lynn Kagan of Yale described why these demographic changes have such an impact on the schools:

> The problems of American education are and always have been heightened by the problems facing society. Because education traditionally has been regarded as a partial panacea for decreasing societal inequities, the burdens facing the schools are exacerbated in a period characterized by rapid demographic changes. Various trends clearly indicate that the educational establishment will be forced to deal with a variety of new challenges.

A variety of demographic trends are creating new challenges for schools. These include a drop in the fertility rate, an increase in the numbers of "at-risk" children, an increase in the number of single-parent families, and an increase in the numbers of older, upper-middle-class parents who are having children.

In general, according to the 1980 Census, the fertility rate (the average number of children born to each woman) has been dropping. Today, it stands at approximately 1.9, less than the 2.1 children the Census Bureau says are needed to replace the population.

"The challenge for schools will be to meet the differing needs of children from rich and poor families....One solution for schools is to reach and work with parents and to provide for the individualization needed by children through programs involving their families at home."

Dorothy Rich, Executive Director, Home and School Institute

Two groups, however, have shown an increase in the birth rate: teenaged mothers and women over age 30.

Educating children from these disparate groups will place special stress on the school system during the coming years. As HSI's Dorothy Rich notes:

> The challenge for schools will be to meet the differing needs of children from rich and poor families, without losing the rich to the private schools and without promoting a new segregation in the schools based on children's background and experience. One solution for schools is to reach and work with parents, and to provide for the individualization needed by children through programs involving their families at home. Schools can build on the basic caring that all families, rich or poor, have for their children.

Students and families "at risk."

Former Virginia Governor Charles Robb was

quoted in the September 1986 issue of *Updating School Board Policies:* "We now must move to meet the needs of those who, despite or because of school reform, are at a greater risk of being lost to society as productive individuals."

A number of revolutionary changes in the American family are affecting the numbers of children who are "at risk" of failure in schools. Implications of these trends for American schools will be profound. These changes include:

- Living with one parent has become the norm for many of today's children. Single-parent families include: more than 50 percent of all black children; 25 percent of all Hispanic children; 16 percent of all white children. Overall, 26 percent of families with children in the U.S. are single-parent families; in 1970, the number was 13 percent.
- By age 20, two out of ten white females and four out of ten black females are mothers.
- The family situation of these single mothers shows: 36 percent did not finish high school; 62 percent of the families have incomes under $10,000; 42 percent live in central cities; 24 percent of their children were born out of wedlock; one out of three lives in poverty; two out of three is headed by single black or single Hispanic females.
- One-half of all teenage mothers drop out of school and never return.
- The continuing high birth rate among teenagers also contributes to the growing number of families living in poverty.

It is exactly those demographic indicators—children living in poverty, children whose parents have no history of success in school, and children who perceive themselves to have fewer options available to them—that place students "at risk" of failure in school. As Albert Holland, principal of Burke High School in Boston, said in *Time* Magazine, "Schools can't educate alone. They used to be isolated, but now the problems are so magnified that it takes the family, it takes the school, it takes the community all working together to make education possible."

"Schools can't educate alone. They used to be isolated, but now the problems are so magnified that it takes the family, it takes the school, it takes the community all working together to make education possible."

Albert Holland, Principal
Burke High School, Boston

A major study by the Institute for Educational Leadership agrees. While schools do not have the resources to meet all the needs of "at-risk" students, schools can provide referrals to a variety of community agencies that serve "at-risk" students.

In a February 3 article in *School Board News,* Erica Gordon Sorohan noted that many school districts are turning to preschool programs to address the needs of at-risk students and the national shortage of day care. Such programs, she found, offer some practical advantages: "established physical and administrative structures, high quality, continuity and stability for children, and convenience for parents."

An integral component of many of these public preschool programs, Sorohan reported, is parent education. Classes focus on such topics as discipline, time management, English, helping with homework, basic skills, and interpreting test results.

Parent education is also a focus of the new Even Start program, incorporated into the Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988. Under this new program, local education agencies may be eligible for federal funds to support programs that include:

- screening and preparation of parents and children for participation, including testing, referral to necessary counseling, and related services
- scheduling and location of services to allow joint participation by parents and children
- establishing instructional programs that promote adult literacy, training parents to support the educational growth of their children, and preparation of children for success in regular school programs
- special training for staff to work with parents and young children.

Thomas A. Shannon, executive director of the National School Boards Association, commented on the new Even Start Program by noting, "NSBA welcomes this effort as one way to encourage parent involvement in education. The Association's testimony on proposed changes in the Chapter 1 program strongly urged Congress to adopt policies to reach out to all parents. Local school board members know the vital role parents have to play in helping their children do well in school."

Children from single-parent families.

Some educators have expressed particular concern about the numbers of children from single-parent families. However, a study conducted for the National Institute of Education found that it is *income,* more than the absence of a parent, that accounts for most of the differences in aptitude and

achievement between children from one- and two-parent families. (Forty percent of single-parent, female-headed families have incomes that place them below the poverty line.) When the socio-economic status of families is taken into consideration, the differences in achievement and aptitude are not large.

On the other hand, children from single-parent homes do have more difficulty in some areas of school life. They tend to have poorer attendance, act in more disruptive ways, and receive lower grades.

Being a single parent does not by itself reduce a parent's involvement with the school. A 1982 study conducted by the Appalachia Education Laboratory found that single parents talk to teachers approximately as often as other parents. They also are likely to spend as much time with their children working on schoolwork.

Some of the children who need the schools' help most are the ones who don't have a parent who can be involved with the schools. Many immigrants from Central America, for instance, live with a member of their extended family or a family friend. Many other children live with parents who must hold up to two full-time jobs just to support the family here and perhaps send money home. "We must not be discouraged by poor rates of parent participation in our programs," said Bill Bliss of Language & Communication Associates at a Trinity College conference on parent involvement and literacy. "We need to be creative in our scheduling, and we should consider setting up drop-in resource centers and other mechanisms to allow parents to flexibly access our services."

Families whose native language is not English.

For an increasing number of students, English is not the language spoken at home. For these families, the home-school partnership is more difficult—but even more essential. And some parents are not only unable to read English-language materials sent from school to home; they are illiterate in their native language as well. A 1982 Census Bureau study of English language proficiency found that:

- The illiteracy rate is 9 percent for adults whose native language is English; 48 percent for those whose native language is not English
- 37 percent of the adults classified as illiterate do not speak English at home
- Of that group, 82 percent were born outside the United States, 21 percent entered the country within the past six years, and 42 percent are living in neighborhoods in which a language other than English is predominant
- Up to 86 percent of the non-English speakers who are illiterate in English are also illiterate in their native language.

As a result, said Bliss, "More than one school system has gone to the trouble of translating school manuals and sending home notices to parents in Spanish, only to find later that the parents were unable to read the information."

There are some programs that are effective in communicating with this hard-to-reach group of parents. One way this can happen, experts at the Trinity conference suggested, is to develop a communication network comprising bilingual volunteers, bilingual parents, paid aides, or staff. This network can:

- translate important school communications on such subjects as helping with homework, suggested study habits, needed school supplies, school programs and policies
- help integrate limited-English-proficiency parents into the life of the school—by serving as translators, by welcoming parents who want to help in the classrooms, by conducting workshops for parents.

The 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey of Teachers found that Hispanic parents feel a particular need for increased home-school communication. For example, 80 percent of Hispanic parents said they believed a school newsletter would help "a lot" in improving education. That figure was considerably higher than for white parents—66 percent—or black parents—71 percent. Only 51 percent of teachers agreed.

Children of the "baby echo."

While there are dramatic increases in the numbers of "at-risk" children, there is also a smaller, but significant, increase in the number of children born to older, upper-middle-class parents.

Those parents who are choosing to have children later in life are likely to have only one child. In 1947, the average family size was nearly four persons, but by 1978, the mean size had decreased to closer to three. Some demographers predict that average family size will be 1.5 children by the year 2000. Kagan and Schraft observed that from this segment of the population, schools can expect smaller family size to "increase the importance of friendships, neighborhoods, and organizations as sources of support and personal ties."

These parents also have high expectations of their children's schools. They are much more likely to select private education for their children if the public school does not meet their requirements. Joe Nathan, who coordinated the National Governors'

Association (NGA) report noted, "There is a growing market for educational options—including private schools and remedial assistance—among upper income families." He cited one NGA study which found that in a number of large cities, "up to twice as many public school teachers send their children to private and parochial schools as the general population."

These parents expect and demand meaningful involvement with their children's education, whether they send their children to public or private schools. Rich described them by saying:

> These are the parents who have searched for and found preschool care for their kids. They know questions to ask. They are willing to pay money for the services they need. . . .They can be difficult for school personnel who are not accustomed to working with parents.

George Tipler of the Wisconsin School Boards Association, described the changes these parents will require in school-parent involvement. "They're not going to be satisfied selling cookies," he said. At the same time, these sophisticated parents offer public schools an opportunity to enlist the support of a sophisticated clientele.

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Implications for school board members of demographic changes in student populations:

- As the population of the U.S. changes, all Americans have an increased stake in improving the achievement of poor and minority students. School districts must make special attempts to emphasize equity as well as excellence for all students.
- Preschool education may become a cost-effective way to reach "at-risk" children. Studies described in Chapter I demonstrate the longlasting effects of early intervention in the lives of "at-risk" children. By investing in preschool programs, school districts may save thousands of dollars per student per year in reduced special education costs.
- School must develop programs involving other social service agencies in cooperating to meet the needs of "at-risk" students.
- Many of the traditional models for parent involvement are more effective in reaching middle-class parents than in reaching poor and non-English-speaking parents. There are successful examples of involving poor families in their children's education (some described in Chapters I and III). School districts need to make a special effort to reach these groups of parents.
- There is considerable evidence that single parents are already involved with their children's education. Special programs—including parent education especially targeted to the needs of single parents—could benefit both parents and their children.
- Schools must be especially sensitive to the needs of children from single-parent families. For example, communications may be addressed "To the family of" rather than "To the parents of." Noncustodial parents may also wish to receive information on their children's progress.
- Depending on school district policies on use of school facilities by outside groups, school buildings may be made available for single-parent support groups, such as Parents Without Partners.
- Research consistently shows that public school parents are the most likely to be supportive of the public schools. At a time when only 28 percent of all American households have children in schools, it is especially important to involve these parents in meaningful ways in their children's education. Such involvement, as Chapter I has noted, leads to increased satisfaction with the schools.

Schools need to accommodate the needs of working parents if they want to build relationships that can lead to increased communication and improved student achievement.

Increasing Numbers of Working Parents

The old picture of a "traditional family"—working father, mother who remained in the home, and two children—hardly exists any more. The 1987 Metropolitan Life survey found that only 27 percent of the households with school aged children today can be described that way. The reality for most families is quite different:

- Today, more than 60 percent of women with children under age 14 are in the labor force; although about half of those women work only part-time.
- According to the Census Bureau, nearly 90 percent of the nation's 50 million working women are likely to become pregnant during their working years.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that two-thirds of the 15 million new entrants into the job market between now and 1995 will be women.

FIGURE 2-1

When Different Teachers Prefer To Meet With Parents

	Before the school day	During the school day	After school	In the evening
TOTAL TEACHERS	26%	31%	58%	9%
Type of School				
Elementary	29	23	64	7
Junior High	23	41	52	8
Senior High	20	42	49	13
Size of Place				
Inner city	29	31	51	12
Other urban	27	37	64	7
Suburban	34	32	54	8
Small town	20	30	60	8
Rural	22	29	60	9
Sex of Teacher				
Male	26	37	51	11
Female	25	29	61	8
Teaching Experience				
Less than 5 years	25	30	57	12
5 to 9 years	26	33	59	10
10 to 19 years	24	31	58	8
20 years or more	28	31	58	7

SOURCE: *The Metropolitan Life Survey of The American Teacher 1987: Strengthening Links Between Home and School*

• By 1995, 80 percent of women between the ages of 25 and 44 will be in the labor market, an increase from 50 percent in 1970.

• Only about 10 percent of American children are cared for in licensed day care centers.

• HSI figures indicate that between 5 and 7 million children aged 7 to 13 are left unsupervised for significant parts of the day. "Exact figures are unavailable since many parents do not reveal if their children are unsupervised," HSI noted.

Because mothers have traditionally assumed most of the responsibility for establishing and maintaining communication with the school, the increase in working women will continue to have significant impact on parent involvement. First, it means that there are significantly fewer parents available for participation in school activities during the day. Schools need to accommodate the needs of working parents if they want to build relationships that can lead to increased communication and improved student achievement.

Yet the 1987 Metropolitan Life survey found significant discrepancies between when *parents* prefer to meet with teachers and when *teachers* prefer to meet with parents. Most teachers (91 percent) said they prefer to meet with parents before, during, or after school. Only a small percentage (9 percent) prefer to meet in the evening. In general, that is true for teachers at all grade levels and in all types of school districts (see Figure 2-1). Teachers in inner

cities, high school teachers, and teachers with less than five years' experience are most likely to accommodate parents' desires to meet in the evening.

But only 67 percent of parents say that those hours are convenient for them. One-third (32 percent) prefer to meet with teachers in the evening. Parents of high school students and working parents most frequently prefer evening meetings. Parents in central cities are slightly less likely to prefer evening meetings than parents in the suburbs or outside the metropolitan area (see Figure 2-2).

"Unless this mismatch in schedules can be overcome," the Metropolitan Life survey noted, "there remains a need for working parents to occasionally take time off from work, or else forego direct contact with teachers." In fact, the survey noted, in single-parent families where the parent works full-time, 71 percent had taken time off from work to visit school. In two-parent families where both parents work full-time, 73 percent had taken time off from work to visit school.

At the same time, scheduling evening events is not likely to be the only solution to the problem. Some working parents may prefer spending time with their

FIGURE 2-2

When Parents Prefer to Meet With Teachers

	Before the school day	During the school day	After school	In the evening
TOTAL PARENTS	17%	24%	43%	32%
Child's school level				
Elementary	17	23	44	28
Junior high	19	27	39	34
High school	17	26	42	36
Size of place				
Central city	18	24	43	30
Rest of metro area	19	24	41	32
Outside metro area	12	25	46	34
Race of parent				
White	17	22	46	32
Black	18	37	29	32
Hispanic	10	23	42	30
Family Status & Work Status of Parents				
One-Parent families				
Not working	14	36	38	29
Working part-time	16	25	42	27
Working full-time	19	19	42	35
Two-Parent families				
One not working	17	34	40	28
Both work, one part-time	17	23	50	27
Both work full-time	15	17	43	38

SOURCE: *The Metropolitan Life Survey of The American Teacher 1987: Strengthening Links Between Home and School*

children to attend a meeting at school. And teachers may not be available in the evenings, either because they hold a part-time job after school or because as working parents, they are eager to spend time with their own families. In addition, collective bargaining agreements may require school districts to compensate teachers and support staff members such as custodial staff for any evening meetings.

For some important school events, such as conferences, school districts can work closely with employers to facilitate participation during the school day by parents. Schools must let parents know about these important events well in advance if they expect participation. Other ways to encourage parent involvement may include inviting parents to eat lunch with their children, planning pot-luck dinners, or even holding an open house on a weekend.

Although working parents have less time available, many make a significant attempt not to short-change their children's education. Linney and Vernberg's study of working parents found that there is a decline in parent-school activities that do not include children or allow parents also to spend time with their children. A 1982 study by Heyns found that working mothers spend nearly as much time caring for their children as mothers who are not employed.

A second conclusion that can be drawn from the increase in working mothers is that there is a significant unmet need for adequate child care in the U.S. today. Pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton says that for over 50 percent of working mothers, choices in child care are "grossly inadequate."

Kagan and Schraft noted, "For all these reasons, schools re-evaluating their roles in the 1980s may well want to consider assisting parents to meet these needs, either through direct service or referral."

A 1985 survey by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development found that only 3 percent of elementary schools offer child care before the school day. Approximately 6 percent provide some type of after-school care.

But the numbers of schools offering such programs is increasing, says Dale Fink, Project Associate at the Wellesley College School Age Child Care program. He offers two possible explanations for the dramatic increase in the numbers of after-school day care programs.

First, "Public schools are finding they have to offer day care programs in order to compete with private schools," he says. "Highly motivated, two-income professional couples expect not only high quality schooling, but also day care—which many private schools now provide."

Second, he notes that many educators are dismayed to see the numbers of children—sometimes as young as first or second grade—who are still on the playground after school because they have no one waiting for them at home. "Why do schools care what children do when the school day is over? Because they know the children will bring it back to school with them the next day."

In many communities, Fink notes, schools have no direct responsibility for before- and after-school programs, but make their facilities available to other agencies that provide child care. "Nationally, the YMCA is probably the biggest provider of school-site day care," he says, adding that YWCAs, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, and Campfire also sponsor in-school day care.

In Florida, a private nonprofit corporation called Latchkey Services for Children, Inc., sponsors before- and after-school day care programs in schools in Pinellas and Pasco Counties. The programs are housed in cafeterias and other shared school space, says Deputy Executive Director Jean Hand, and parents pay on a sliding scale based on family income. Although the programs enroll more than 2,000 children, there is still a waiting list. "The need for quality day care is there, and parents are more than willing to pay," Hand says.

National statistics confirm Hand's statement. In fact, the 1987 Metropolitan Life survey asked parents about whether they wanted schools to offer before- and after-school day care. . .and whether they were willing to pay for it. Parents said they would be willing to enroll their children in either educational (62 percent) or non-educational (75 percent) after-school programs. Interest in these programs was not confined to working parents, although they expressed a greater interest in such programs.

Because parents are used to public school services being free, some school board members have expressed concern that parents would expect before- and after-school day care to be free as well. The Metropolitan Life survey indicates that a majority of parents recognize the need to pay for these additional services—and are willing to do so. Even a majority of low-income parents said they would pay for educational after-school programs. An overwhelming 80 percent of parents who say they "sometimes" leave their children on their own say they would be willing to pay for an after-school educational program.

Finally, the increase in the numbers of working mothers means that fathers must be expected to assume a greater responsibility for their children's education. Fathers can be encouraged to serve on parent organization boards and to visit classrooms. Schools can ask fathers to become "room parents." Schools can also plan parent education programs on how both parents can contribute to their children's learning.

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Implications for school boards of the increase in the number of working parents:

• Schools need to seek new ways to encourage working parents to participate in their children's education. These may include increasing take-home learning activities, changes in scheduling, and changes in the nature of school-parent activities (for example, planning more events for *families* rather than for *parents.)*

• Providing before- and after-school child care can be a way to increase working parents' commitment to the schools. Seventy-six percent of parents in a recent Gallup Poll said schools should provide before- and after-school care.

• School districts can seek partnerships with other agencies to run these programs. Because working parents—especially mothers—"can only realize [their] potential in the work place if [they] are confident that [their] baby is in good hands," according to Brazelton, businesses also are recognizing the importance of child care. The business community should be involved in working with the school district to explore child care needs and possible responses.

• Providing before- and after-school child care can be a way to increase working parents' commitment to the schools. Seventy-six percent of parents in a recent Gallup Poll said schools should provide before- and after-school care.

• School districts can seek partnerships with other agencies to run these programs. Because working parents—especially mothers—"can only realize [their] potential in the work place if [they] are confident that [their] baby is in good hands," according to Brazelton, businesses also are recognizing the importance of child care. The business community should be involved in working with the school district to explore child care needs and possible responses.

• The increase in the numbers of working parents of preschoolers may increase the demand for districts to provide preschool programs. The Gallup Poll found that 83 percent of parents believe that preschool education programs are important when they are paid for by the parents of children participating in the program. Currently, 29 states either have or are considering providing some funding for preschool programs. As part of any long-range planning, school boards should consider whether preschool programs should become a part of the district's educational services.

• Examine the cost implications of encouraging after-school and evening parent meetings. Not only teachers, but also custodians and other support staff members' contracts may have provisions that directly affect the cost of such meetings.

Lack of Awareness of the Vital Role Parents Can Play

American parents are not as involved with their children's education as are parents in some other cultures—for example, the Japanese. The U.S. Department of Education's report, *Japanese Education Today*, summarized some of the characteristics of the relationship between the family and the school in Japan. For example:

—Most mothers of school-age children do not work, or do not work when their children are not in school.

—Mothers of preschoolers provide informal learning opportunities such as drawing, making simple toys with paper, paste and scissors, and various activities related to basic reading and counting skills.

—Children are instilled with a deep sense of responsibility to mother and family, which becomes an important factor in developing motivation for school achievement.

Many of the conditions that make Japanese education successful could not—and probably should not—be adopted by Americans. However, one striking difference between Japanese and American parents lies in their perception of their own role and their children's responsibility for learning.

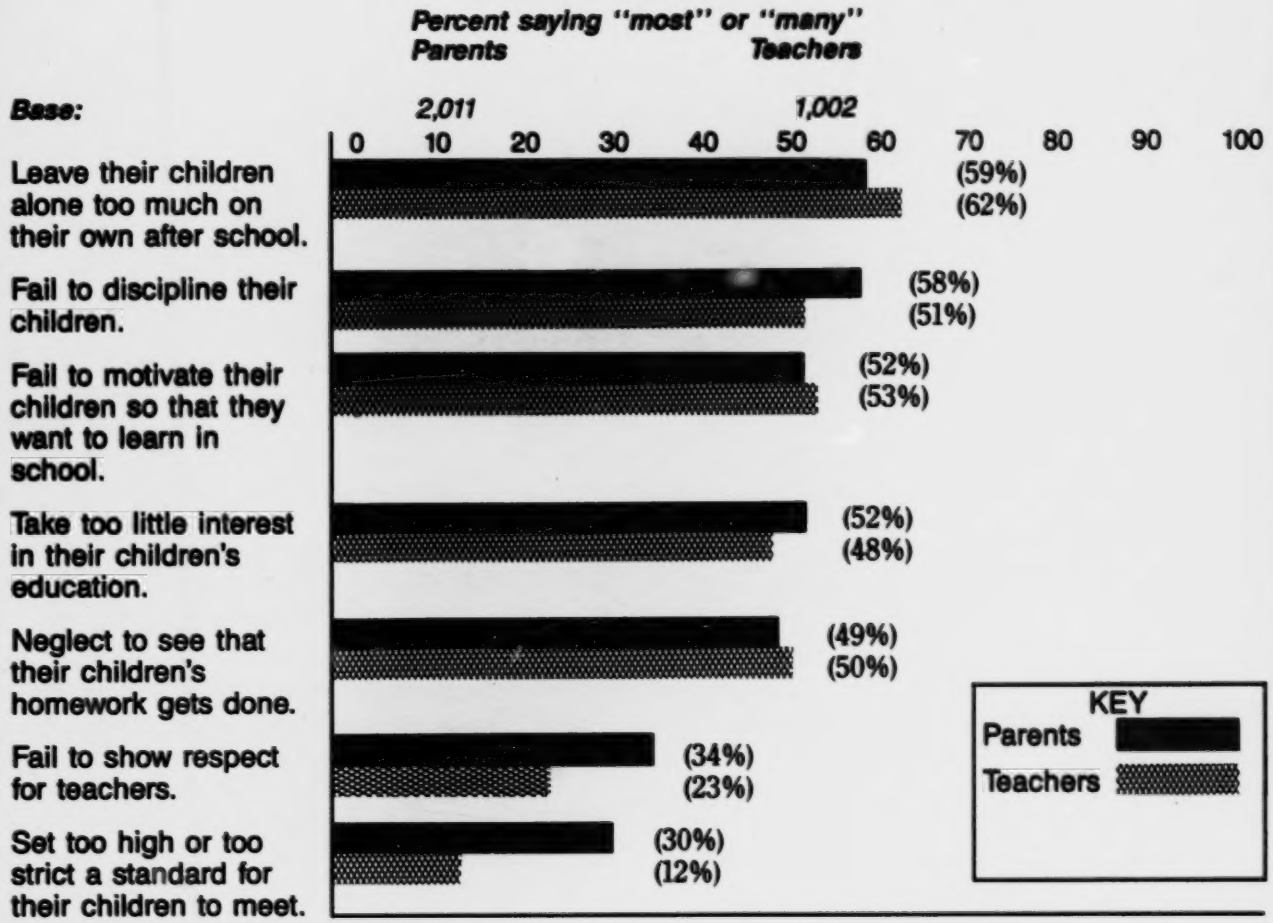
One study reported in *Working Mother* magazine asked mothers in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota and in Taiwan and Japan to rank the importance of luck, natural ability, effort, and difficulty of schoolwork in determining a child's performance in school. Japanese and Chinese mothers said that effort was the most important ingredient. American mothers said that ability was the key.

"That's enormously important," said Marc Tucker of the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. "If you think natural ability is the principal source of achievement, you don't have to do much." For example, he suggested, "you don't have to pay attention to curriculum content, or how much TV children watch, or what demands you make on them, or how much support you give." In contrast, Tucker noted, "if you think effort is most important, you emphasize all those things."

The 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher asked both teachers and parents to respond to some criticisms about parents' lack of understanding of their role in their children's

FIGURE 2-3

Criticisms That Parents and Teachers Think are Valid For Many Parents



SOURCE: *The Metropolitan Life Survey of The American Teacher 1987: Links Between Home and School*

education. The results, summarized in Figure 2-3, show a surprising agreement between parents and teachers.

- Over six in ten teachers (62 percent) think that "many" or "most" parents leave their children alone too much on their own after school. Nearly the same number of parents (59 percent) agree with this criticism.
- A majority (51 percent) of teachers in the survey said they believed that many or most parents failed to discipline their children. An even higher number of parents (58 percent) agreed.
- A majority of both teachers (52 percent) and parents (53 percent) say many or most parents do not motivate their children so they want to learn in school.

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Implications of the lack of parent understanding of the importance of their role in their children's education:

- There is a need for increased parent education about their role. In a number of studies, parents have indicated a willingness to participate in a course that would give them information on how to work with the school to help their child achieve.

Other activities, such as the Miami calendar (one page of which is reprinted in Chapter IV) offer other examples.

Educational Practices that Serve as Barriers to Parent Participation

Previous sections may have created the impression that parents are responsible for most of the problems that currently exist in carrying out parent participation. That is certainly not true—a number of school practices have discouraged or completely blocked any parent participation.

First, although most school officials say they want parent participation, in practice they may offer parents only limited opportunities for involvement. A 1985 study conducted by the National PTA offers some insight into the different perceptions of "involvement" held by parents and school administrators.

About three-fourths of the parents surveyed said they were interested in attending classes and workshops with teachers and principals, serving as advocates for their school in meetings with the school board or other officials, or serving on an advisory committee. Parents also expressed a willingness to continue in their traditional roles as homework helpers, fundraisers, and chaperons on field trips.

School administrators, on the other hand, said they did not want parents participating as advocates. Participation in traditional activities was fine, the administrators said, but they were unwilling to have parents meet with school boards or serve on advisory committees.

Second, many teachers overestimate the contacts they do have with parents. As a result, they may believe that they are doing an effective job of promoting parent involvement, when parents' perception is the opposite. Surprisingly large numbers of parents are excluded from some of the most common, traditional communications from the school. Epstein noted that in one survey included in the *Encyclopedia of School Administration and Supervision*, over one-third of the parents reported they had no conference with the teacher during the year. Almost two-thirds never talked with a teacher by phone. Although most teachers (over 95 percent) reported that they communicate with parents of their students, most parents said they were not involved in deep, detailed, or frequent communications with teachers about their child's program or progress.

Third, many teachers have received no training in working with parents. Because they are not comfortable, they may avoid any significant parent involvement at all. Inservice programs can address these concerns and show teachers and administrators successful ways to involve families.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University studied the costs of this lack of knowledge by teachers. In the study, Epstein noted, some teachers had worked out successful practices to use home learning activities with parents who had a college education, high school, or less than a high school diploma. Other teachers did not know how to involve less-educated parents, and claimed that the parents lacked the ability or willingness to help. "The contrasts were significant," Epstein said. "Teachers who had organized the frequent use of parent involvement were able to get good results from all parents—not just those who are traditionally thought to be helpful to teachers and to children."

Fourth, in many schools, parent involvement is seen as important only in the primary school years. Epstein's research shows "a dramatic decline of parent involvement practices by teachers and participation by parents in learning activities from grades 1 to 5. And this trend worsens in the secondary grades." Parents receive fewer suggestions from teachers on ways they can help their children at home. At the same time, parents feel less able to help their children in reading and math activities—though Epstein has found "most want directions about how to help."

In the August 1987 issue of *The Executive Educator*, Ronald Booth agreed. "Involving parent volunteers is just as beneficial and appropriate—maybe even more so—at the high school level as it is in the earlier grades."

Much of the responsibility for creating a climate that welcomes parents, Booth noted, "sits on the principal's shoulders." He mentioned the importance of defining parents' roles, making sure the program is implemented, and providing training, support, and recognition for parents who participate.

A study by Jean Wellisch confirms Booth's assessment. This 1975 in-depth study (described previously) was conducted in conjunction with the national evaluation of the Emergency School Aid Act. The purpose of the study was to identify factors that led to increases in student reading and math achievement. The researchers found that when parent involvement in the classroom was high, reading and math achievement were also found to be high.

But what led to parent involvement? Researchers learned such practices as home visits by teachers, scheduled parent visits to classrooms, and regular parent meetings all contributed to increased parent involvement. Interestingly, teachers reported that these activities were more likely to take place "in schools where. . .administrators assumed more responsibility for policy decisions [such as] decisions. . .to engage in more promotional activities

and to hold parent-teacher meetings more frequently."

Finally, some school practices needlessly discourage parent involvement. After a divorce, some noncustodial parents want to continue to receive all information about their children's schooling. Some district practices have made this unnecessarily difficult, for example, by insisting that the school would send communications to only one parent.

In some states, legislation may constrain a school's ability to inform both parents of their children's progress after a divorce. In those states, school boards, parent-teacher organizations, and associations of single parents might need to work together to inform state legislatures about the impact that such state laws can have on discouraging valuable parent involvement.

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Implications of school barriers to parent participation for school boards:

- The school board has the responsibility to set the district's policy on parent participation. If your board believes involvement is important, communicate that message to administrators, teachers. . .and parents.
- Ask parents regularly and formally to offer their services to the school or district. Publicize a number of examples of ways parents can be involved—serving as classroom resources, chaperoning a field trip, participating in a committee that meets after school, for example.
- Examine policies and practices that may be discouraging parent involvement. Parents themselves will be the best source of information. An open hearing or informal parents' gathering may highlight barriers that school officials did not know existed.
- Provide funding for regular training and inservice for all school staff members—including support personnel—on the value of parent involvement in education.
- Working with the advice of your legal counsel, develop a district policy on communicating with noncustodial parents.
- Because school administrators are vital to the success of any parent involvement program, work with your superintendent to develop a program that will encourage principals to adopt parent involvement programs in their schools.

Despite the numerous barriers that can interfere with parent school involvement, many districts have adopted effective programs. The next chapter discusses some of the models for parent involvement and offers examples of outstanding programs. ■

MODELS FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Across the country, a number of school districts have adopted successful parent involvement programs. These programs range from parent involvement in making decisions for schools to parents working with their children at home to improve achievement. But before any parent involvement program can be successful, both schools and parents must meet certain minimal obligations.

This chapter will first discuss the basic responsibilities of both schools and parents. Second, it will outline a number of different models for parent involvement.

Basic Responsibilities of Parents

The most basic responsibility of parents, of course, is "providing for their children's food, clothing, shelter, health, safety, and general well-being," said Joyce Epstein. When parents could not or would not meet those basic responsibilities, schools have had to intervene, either by direct assistance or by notifying social service agencies in the community. Parents need to understand clearly that time school staff must spend on performing these parental responsibilities will necessarily take away from the time the school can spend on instruction.

Beyond that minimal level of responsibility, parents have a responsibility to see that their home environment encourages their children toward achievement. For very young children, this might include teaching colors and shapes. For older children, it will involve establishing regular routines, holding consistent and clear expectations about behavior, providing a time and place for homework, and establishing a regular bedtime.

For children of all ages, parents need regular communication. The U.S. Education Department noted that American mothers, on average, spend less than half an hour each day talking, explaining, or reading with their children. Fathers are worse, spending an average of only 15 minutes a day.

Some school districts have adopted programs that support parents in this important educational work. But such programs should recognize that parent-child relationships are different from teacher-child relationships. As Rhonda McShane Becher noted:

> The relationships parents have with their children are personal, subjective, and occur over a long period of time....Teachers' relationships with children...need to be objective, impersonal, and short term....A common mistake teachers make in less successful [parent involvement] programs is to automatically suggest activities for parents to do with their children that they themselves have used successfully at school.

Programs in Matteson, Illinois, and Nutley, New Jersey, described in the following chapter, are designed to provide parent support and parent education.

Basic Responsibilities of Schools

In a 1981 article in *Phi Delta Kappan*, J. Cy Rowell outlined the basic obligation of schools: to communicate with parents.

He pointed out that schools collect rather detailed information on the families of their students: health records, employment information, even family incomes to determine which students qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches. "The need for parents to know about teachers and the principal," he said, "is the flip side of the school's need for family information."

Schools also have an obligation to communicate other information to parents. Epstein noted:

> Parents at all grade levels need clear information on the objectives and specific skills for each subject each year; on course requirements and consequences of course selections; on standards for promotion and graduation; on grading practices and test results; on school budget allocations and policy decisions; and on other important district, school, and classroom matters.

The form of these communications is not important. They may include calendars, radio and television announcements, written notices or newsletters, telephone calls, and personal visits by teachers. What is important is that they are clear, regular, and frequent.

Each year, approximately 18 percent of Americans move. As a result, school officials cannot assume that *any* school policy is clearly understood by everyone.

Some districts have made special efforts to increase communication between home and school. In Philadelphia, for example, teachers staff telephone hotlines to help students with their homework, to let parents know about school activities, and to provide advice on parenting. Nationwide, 64 percent of parents in the Metropolitan Life survey said they thought a homework hotline would help "a lot" in improving education. Only 42 percent of teachers agreed.

In Perth Amboy, New Jersey, parents who speak little or no English have been invited to attend special "Parent Recognition Nights." During these evenings, teachers honor and entertain parents and present information about the school. Illiterate parents are given the opportunity to feel successful through arts and crafts. In that way, the schools are helping these parents recognize their role as their children's first teachers.

Models for Parent Involvement

Once parents and schools have met their minimum obligations, successful parent involvement programs can be effective. There are a number of different ways parents can be involved with their children's learning. These include:

- volunteer programs
- at-home learning
- parent advocacy programs
- parent education programs
- governance.

Volunteer Programs

This is the most traditional form of parent involvement. In the classroom, parents may be asked to work with one or more children, teach a lesson or a mini-course, talk about a career, demonstrate a special talent or hobby, or help teachers on class trips or at holiday parties. Out of the classroom, parents may supervise playgrounds and lunch rooms, provide clerical support, telephone parents of absent students, work with students after school, or serve as a consultant for a special school or district concern. Many of these out-of-classroom activities do not need to take place during regular school hours.

All these activities are important. They provide benefits to students, who receive improved educational opportunities. They benefit teachers, by freeing them up to concentrate on teaching. They benefit schools, by providing additional resources.

Yet in most schools, volunteers make up only a small fraction of all parents. If all volunteer jobs can be performed only during the day, mothers who work full-time will be able to volunteer infrequently, if at all. Working fathers face similar constraints. In fact, Epstein's surveys show that only about 4 percent of parents—one or two per classroom are highly involved as volunteers, spending 25 or more days per year in the school.

At-Home Learning

Although a relatively small proportion of parents are able to spend time volunteering in school, almost all parents work with their children at home. Epstein found that more than 85 percent of parents said they spent 15 minutes or more helping their child at home when the teacher requested their help.

One of the most frequent home-learning activities is asking parents to read with their children. Home reading can have significant benefits for children's reading achievement.

A 1982 study by Karnes, Shwedel, and Steinberg found that parents of young children of average intelligence read to their children an average of 7 to 8 minutes a day; parents of young gifted children spent 21 minutes, on average, reading to their children. Romotowski and Trepanier found that when parents read to young children four to seven times per week, their children's reading achievement scores were significantly higher than children of parents who did not read to them that often.

Parents may be asked to reinforce general learning skills that will help the child in school. These might include helping children develop study skills by setting and following a schedule for schoolwork, working on a specific behavior problem, or developing problem-solving skills. Other activities might include watching a television program together and then discussing it.

The Home and School Institute in Washington, D.C., has developed a number of home learning activities. In cooperation with the National Education Association, HSI asked teachers in 140 elementary schools to distribute one learning activity each week. Results were overwhelmingly positive. Nine out of ten parents said they used the activity; 99 percent said they enjoyed it; 98 percent said their children had learned something.

In Miami, Dade Partners has developed a series of calendars that suggest specific learning activities for each day. A sample is reprinted in the next chapter.

Why are home learning programs so popular. . .and so effective? One reason, said Rich, is that this approach "appeals to the most basic parental motivation for involvement in the first place—the desire to help one's child do better."

Parent Advocacy Programs

Parents of public school students have joined forces in a number of cities to act as advocates for educational policies they believe in. In some cases, they serve as advocates for the school district itself, working for increased funding and needed legislation. In other cases, however, they serve as advocates for a particular group of students—for example, those with disabilities or a specific educational program—such as bilingual education.

These parent advocacy groups are credited with a number of major successes:

• The Philadelphia Parents' Union was organized during a teachers' strike in 1972. The group trains parents to become advocates, conducts parent workshops on such issues as curriculum and district policies. Today, PPU members sit on a mayoral panel that nominates candidates for the school board.

• In Atlanta, APPLE Corps (described in the next chapter) played a major role in opening up the school budget process to all citizens. Today, hearings on the budget begin nearly eight months before a new budget is adopted.

• In California, citizens' groups were a major lobbying force for S.B. 813, a bill that instituted a number of major reforms in California's schools.

The largest advocacy organization is the National PTA. Between 1962 and 1982, however, the PTA lost 50 percent of its members. Only in the last few years has national PTA membership begun to climb again.

Parent Education

"You know more than you think you do," Dr. Benjamin Spock said at the beginning of *Baby and Child Care*. But the job of today's parents has grown increasingly complicated. Parents need information on subjects that range from discipline to drugs, from providing early stimulation to dealing with a teenager. And a growing number of parents need information on how to raise a child alone.

In many school districts, policymakers have recognized the importance of providing specific courses or workshops to address these concerns. Remedial programs are expensive. And research has demonstrated the effectiveness of early intervention.

In Miami, first grade teachers hold workshops for all parents outlining skills that will be taught during the year. The teachers also suggest ways parents can reinforce those skills at home.

In Indianapolis, parents receive information on how social service agencies are organized. These workshops also outline specific services available to parents.

Governance

In a 1985 *Education Week* article, Lynn Olson noted that "the people who have to live with [school decisions] are parents, many of whom are no longer content to sit by the sidelines while politicians and professionals make decisions about their children."

At the beginning of this decade, it appeared that there was a strong trend toward parent participation in school governance, noted Don Davies, president of the Institute for Responsive Education. He cited a number of examples:

• Most major federal education programs adopted during the 1970s mandated some form of parent or citizen participation, commonly parent advisory councils.

• Several states—including California, Florida, South Carolina and Virginia—have mandated local advisory councils as part of a school finance reform package.

• Several local districts have established school councils as part of a desegregation program.

Clearly, a precedent had been established. Wiegerink and others concluded in 1980 that "parent involvement of a substantive nature is now clearly a matter of public policy in the United States."

In many school districts, policymakers have recognized the importance of providing specific courses or workshops to address parents' need for information in subjects that range from discipline to drugs, from providing early stimulation to dealing with a teenager.

Yet although a precedent still exists today, there is relatively little substantive parent participation in education. Changes in federal legislation, for example, have led to significant reductions in the number and authority of parent advisory councils.

"Too many officials who must make difficult education decisions view the increased level of citizen involvement as intrusive and immobilizing," said South Carolina school board member Hayes Mizell. "Decision-makers are either afraid of losing their power or they are afraid of making decisions in the face of diverse and conflicting points of view."

As the previous chapter demonstrated, parents want to be involved in school governance; administrators and teachers generally do not welcome their participation in these activities. If parent participation in governance is to be more than "window dressing," it will take clear and direct school board policies.

Parent involvement in decision-making can lead to increased credibility and political clout for school districts. In South Carolina, for example, a network of concerned citizens who participated in statewide hearings on school improvement "made all the difference" in securing passage of the state's Education Improvement Act, said Ann Riley, who headed the task force that lobbied for the bill.

In an article in *The American School Board Journal*, Paul D. Houston, then superintendent in Princeton, New Jersey, described a program in which parents and other community representatives advised the school board on which school capital improvement projects were most likely to be supported by

the community. "By involving the community in the decision-making process," Houston said, "we yield some perogatives, but we gain something in return: a wider network of support for our actions." Before the program was instituted, Princeton citizens had defeated three bond referendums. After the program began, Princeton approved two bond issues, each by margins of 5 to 1.

"By involving the community in the decision-making process, we yield some perogatives, but we gain something in return: a wider network of support for our actions."

Paul D. Houston, former Princeton, NJ, superintendent

School districts do not necessarily need to establish *separate* parent advisory councils. A November 1987 article in *Executive Educator* described the P.T.O. Leaders Council in the Cotati-Rohnert Park (California) Unified School District. This council, which consists of the presidents of the 12 school parent-teacher organizations, meets regularly with the school administration. Mike McLaughlin, former superintendent of the district, described one successful outcome:

> When parents complained about some unsafe street corners and crossings, we arranged for the Leaders Council to meet with school officials, city planners, and police to discuss installing more stop signs and hiring crossing guards.

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Implications of the various models of parent participation for school boards:

- Not all these models are appropriate for all parents. Some may not be appropriate for all school districts. An optimal parent involvement program will include elements from a number of these models, so that less involved parents can increase their connection with the school—and so more active parents can remain energized and enthusiastic about their participation.
- Parent volunteer programs must be significantly restructured if they are going to attract more than a small percentage of parents.
- Citizen involvement in decision-making can lead to increased credibility for educational decisions.
- School districts might explore ways to make existing organizations, such as parent-teacher organizations, more effective in communicating information both from and to parents. ■

SUCCESSFUL PARENT INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS

There is no one best model for parent involvement. Some are simple, limited to one teacher's activities with a small number of parents. Others are complex, involving entire schools, districts or even states in home-school activities. Some require almost no investment except for time and, perhaps, a copying machine. Others have full-time staff and six-figure operating budgets.

Successful family participation programs grow out of the specific needs of communities. This chapter outlines a number of successful family involvement programs. They range from a statewide program in Wisconsin designed to encourage families to participate in their children's education to a Miami home tutoring program that translates all its suggested learning activities in three languages.

Programs that Help Parents Meet Basic Parental Obligations

Matteson, Illinois

The biological act of giving birth does not automatically qualify a person to become a parent. For most new parents, the process of raising their children definitely involves "on the job training."

Schools, of course, have a strong interest in encouraging effective parenting. By the time children reach school at age five or six, much of the foundation that will determine their success in school has already been established.

What if schools could help parents develop their skills so they were more effective in establishing that early foundation? Elementary School District 159 in Matteson, Illinois, which enrolls 2,000 students in grades K-8, has instituted a series of Parent Education Partnerships to meet that goal.

In 1980, a parent-teacher organization asked the district to provide a course in parenting. A pilot program in one school was launched. Objectives, among others, were:

— To develop closer, more positive partnerships with parents

— To give parents a basis for understanding teacher and administrative attitudes and philosophies in problem situations

— To foster mutual cooperation toward a common goal of excellence in education and attainment of positive life experiences through family and school activities

— To increase parents' abilities to cope under stress.

The program is made available to all parents who reside in the school district, whether or not their children attend the public schools. Two courses for parents are offered: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting of Teenagers (STEP-Teen).

STEP is offered each semester at each of the four neighborhood schools in the district. Two school social workers are the instructors; they receive compensatory time and flexible scheduling to accommodate the evening teaching sessions, so the district's salary costs have not increased. No tuition is charged; workbooks are provided free to participants.

The courses are usually offered in the evening to accommodate the needs of working parents. The school district makes building space available at no cost.

The assistant superintendent of District 159, Mr. Mullins, feels that the course has been successful because it provides both useful information and an opportunity for parents to discuss issues with other parents. As a result of attending the course, he says, parents will sometimes ask for the school's help in working on such things as behavior problems or completing homework assignments.

The program meets the needs of both parents and the school district. "Parents want to be involved," Mullins noted, "and schools need to respond."

Nutley, New Jersey

Public Law 94-142 requires parental involvement in developing individual education programs for all handicapped students. But many parents do not have the information they need to be informed partners in this process. And many are uncomfortable with the entire idea of special education.

To help parents of special education youngsters, the Nutley, New Jersey, public schools have developed SKIP—Special Kids, Involved Parents. The goal of the program is to address most of the needs of these parents by providing a series of workshops that will encompass topics and activities of varied interest.

The program, which currently involves parents of about 350 special education students, has been in operation for about four years. The district enrolls 3700 students. Workshops are held once a month during the school year.

Parents' interests and questions help determine some of the workshop topics. Others, however, are

repeated annually. For example, each year the SKIP program offers a workshop on the I.E.P. process designed to make parents aware of the program, inform them of their rights, and explain how the program works in the local schools.

Another annual workshop is a presentation called "Community Help for Your Children." In cooperation with other social service agencies, this workshop offers parents information about what resources are available to them both while their children are attending special education programs and when they leave school. Financial and employment opportunities, the latest information on Social Security and Supplemental Security Income, and other services available to handicapped individuals are discussed in this workshop.

Barbara Hirsch, program coordinator, suggests that parent involvement is essential in planning a program like this one. Before implementing a program, she suggests, talk with special education parents to determine their needs. Ask them what they wish they had known when their children started school.

Except for the costs of preparing handouts at the workshops, the school district assumes no additional costs for the SKIP program. There are, of course, "hidden" costs—such as staff time, management/coordination, arranging facilities, and collecting data. Workshop presenters are volunteers or individuals who are on contract with the school system.

Effective School Communications Programs

Indianapolis, Indiana

No effective parent participation program can exist without regular communication between the school and the home. In the Indianapolis schools, communication is seen as central to helping students learn.

Parent-teacher conferences are a vital component of this home-school communication. They allow parents and teachers to establish a personal relationship, clarify goals and expectations, and ask questions of each other. Because the district believes conferences are so important, it has developed the Parents In Touch (PIT) program to work toward the goal of full participation in parent conferences.

The project is a year-long series of activities that culminate on the two conference days each school year. In July and August, for example, activities include

— Developing, revising, and preparing all dissemination materials, forms, and letters of invitation for printing

— Initiating requests to television programs for Fall talk show appearances

— Developing public service announcements for radio and television.

During the early weeks of school, the PIT staff conducts half-day inservice programs for teachers who serve as building coordinators for the program. They also conduct orientation for PTA and PTO officers.

A community advisory council works to involve everyone in the community in supporting the PIT program. The council includes representatives of large corporations, universities, foundations, unions, parents, teachers, school administrators, and the state department of education.

Participation in parent conferences has increased from 52 percent to 79 percent at the elementary school level. The program rewards schools and teachers for high parent participation; for example, the Indianapolis Power and Light Company makes it possible for teachers with the greatest percent participation to select $30 worth of free instructional materials.

No effective parent participation program can exist without regular communication between the school and the home. In the Indianapolis schools, this communication is seen as central to helping students learn.

On conference day, teachers work an adjusted day, from 1:00 to 8:00 p.m., to accommodate the needs of working parents. During the conference, teachers in grades K-6 hand out an activities calendar that describes home learning activities for each day of the year. Last year, the district also developed a parent-teacher contract for homework that was signed at the conference. Weekly homework information was sent to parents thereafter. This year, the homework contract will be extended through the junior high school age level.

Each year, the program expands, modifies an existing program, or launches a new project. These include a Dial-A-Teacher call-in homework help service, which operates in the early evening four days a week and is supported by Chapter 2 funds. A Parent-Line Communicator offers 3- to 5-minute prerecorded messages on school system policies, procedures, and programs. It also includes information on topics such as "How to prepare for a parent-teacher conference," "How to help your child with homework," and "Motivating your child to succeed."

The PIT staff includes three professionals and two full time clerical workers, who also administer the district's Chapter 1 activities. Izona Warner, the program's director, says its success is due to "system-wide commitment to citizen involvement. We've worked and tried to make everybody feel like they are part of what's going on."

Wisconsin: The Year of the Family in Education

Coordinating a parent communication program within a school or district is a major undertaking. But in 1987-88, the entire state of Wisconsin worked together to spread the message of the importance of parent involvement in education.

The program is called *The Year of the Family in Education.* "We felt that the word 'parent' was too limiting," says Jane Lepeska, director of the Bureau of Education Information Services in the Wisconsin State Department of Education. "Grandparents, step-parents, and other members of an extended family can all play an important role in a child's education."

The program was kicked off at a ceremony before the opening of a Green Bay Packers football game. Dignitaries, including the governor's wife and the state superintendent, spoke on the importance of family participation. A balloon launch at the football game was coordinated with hundreds of other launches around the state; local Hardee's restaurants sponsored this publicity effort.

"We have been actively involved in designing this program," says George Tipler of the Wisconsin School Boards Association, "and our members actively support it. Parent involvement is one of the emerging issues in education today. If the schools are going to offer an alternative to such programs as vouchers, we have to provide opportunities for meaningful involvement of parents."

The state department of education and the advisory committee have developed information packets on a number of important themes. These include suggestions for local communications efforts, classroom activities, and even suggested policies to promote involvement. For example, the packet "Ready, Set, Learn" focused on home learning activities. "Family Safety Net" emphasized the important role of community resources in providing assistance to families.

Districts have been encouraged to form local community-wide committees to evaluate their own involvement programs. County Extension Agents are involved in the program in every county in the state.

One information sheet was titled "Making Parent Involvement Work in Small Schools." It offers tips on how small districts "can take advantage of their size" to get parents involved with schools. For example, "in a small district, the program can take on a more personal quality, and schools can set up special relationships with parents and community groups."

"This isn't a quick-hit program," Lepeska noted. "It's a comprehensive, year-long effort to involve families in their children's education."

Involving Parents as Volunteers

Positive Parents of Dallas

Parents who send their children to public schools have a vested interest in maintaining the quality of those schools. Positive Parents of Dallas channels that interest into a number of creative activities that benefit the schools.

Originally founded as a parent organization, Positive Parents has now expanded to include other supporters of the school system. One of the most important goals of the organization is to create a positive image of the school system and individual schools.

For example, Positive Parents supports a newspaper advertising campaign in which school system parents tell why they support the schools. Later, these ads are reduced to 8-1/2 x 11 inch size and distributed throughout the community. Some schools also reprint the flyers and use the back to print information on their school.

Positive Parents of Dallas conducts a communications seminar each fall for principals, school staff, parents, business and civic volunteers, PTA presidents, and public relations chairmen.

The organization also offers mini-grants for public relations projects by school supporters. The Dallas Citizens Council provided the seed money for this project; in three years, more than $60,000 has been awarded for projects such as billboards, marquees, realtor coffees, and automated calling machines.

Positive Parents conducts a communications seminar each fall for principals, school staff, parents, business and civic volunteers, PTA presidents, and public relations chairmen.

Volunteer presenters include ad agency executives, PR consultants, radio, TV and newspaper reporters and editorial staff, and principals of schools with outstanding communication projects.

Because realtors are often a first source of information on the public schools, the organization

has developed a number of effective ways to work with them. The organization has developed *The Insider's Information Notebook*, now available in more than 800 realtors' offices. The notebook includes a page of information on each district school, including an accurate map of its attendance area. It lists the telephone number of a parent volunteer for each school who will answer specific questions about the school for new residents. A relocation brochure, containing more general information on the schools, is also available to relocation firms, realtors, chambers of commerce, and moving companies.

Involving Parents in Home Learning

Dade Partners

"Parents are a powerful force in their children's education. But so often, this power is not used," says Burt Arnold, coordinator of the Dade County, Florida, parent involvement program. This multi-faceted program, aimed primarily at inner city youth, includes a number of different programs:

— A cooperative preschool involves parents during the day as classroom aides and asks them to return to school at night for training sessions. The program, says Arnold, is living proof of the inaccuracy of the popularly held notion that low-income parents will not turn out for school programs. "All parents want the best for their kids," he says.

— Each spring the superintendent sends a letter to all parents of children who will be entering kindergarten in the fall. The letter welcomes parents and includes information on activities the parents can work on over the summer to prepare their children for school. Because of the diversity of Miami's population, the letter is sent out in English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole.

— Parents of first graders attend teacher-conducted workshops that outline skills to be taught during the year and offer suggestions for at-home learning to support first grade learning objectives. One side effect of the program, Arnold notes, is that it appears to increase teachers' accountability by communicating their instructional goals to parents.

— Calendars that include important school information, as well as specific learning activities for parents and children, are developed for each elementary grade each month. A sample is shown on page 33.

— "Miami Is For My Child and Me" uses community attractions to reinforce basic skills. The program offers families free passes to a number of community attractions including the zoo and the Vizcaya. Schools have developed activity sheets for each attraction that reinforce basic skills. For example, after visiting the zoo, children can play "Zoo Safari," which includes such questions as "Describe an elephant" and "Name 3 animals that do not live in the zoo."

— The Newspaper in Education project is presented in cooperation with the *Miami Herald.* Parents are trained to use the newspaper to reinforce basic skills. A typical high school activity is "Scan news articles and list ten specific incidents that appear in the newspaper that will affect the cost of living in your country and your city." Classroom teachers train their students' parents in how to use the classified ads and offer English instruction during the evening.

The keys to success, Arnold believes, are "the right attitude, motivation, creative thinking, and creative use of resources." With the Dade County program, he believes, "everybody wins. But the children win the most."

Parents as Advocates

Apple Corps, Atlanta

In 1976, an education task force of Atlanta's Junior League met with public school parents to discuss the needs of the public schools. Gradually, the group expanded to include representatives of the chamber of commerce, the PTA, the League of Women Voters, and the school district.

Out of those meetings grew the APPLE Corps, for Atlanta Parents and Public Linked for Education, now in its ninth year of operation. Today, APPLE Corps is a non-profit, independent organization with an operating budget of $124,000. Funding comes from grants and contributions from local foundations, corporations, and individuals, and from nominal user fees for forums and workshops.

The purpose of the organization is to act as an independent voice to mobilize support for the Atlanta Public Schools and to monitor issues affecting the school system. The goals of the organization are among others:

— to promote increased parent and community involvement in schools

— to promote understanding by facilitating the increased flow of communication between Atlanta Public Schools and the city's communities

— to develop productive relationships among APPLE Corps, the public schools and the community

Be a reading role-model for your child. Children imitate behaviors they observe.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1* Ask: "If a grocer purchased three 24 can cases of cola and sold two and a half cases to his first ten customers, how many cans remain to be sold?	**2** Ask your child to arrange the following words in alphabetical order. amount amaze amuse amber among
3 Using a metric ruler have your child find out how many centimeters tall he/she is.	**4** Have your child combine the two sentences below to make one sentence. An old pot was thrown out. The old toy was thrown out.	**5*** Whenever a library book is overdue, have your child figure out the fine.	**6** After your child finishes reading a newspaper article, ask: "What made the story newsworthy?"	**7*** Ask: "If each person in a group of four spent $1.50 to go to a movie, how much did they spend altogether?"	**8** Using the sample letter in Appendix D, have your child circle the following: 1. Return address 2. Greeting 3. Closing	**9*** Have your child use the sample address in Appendix D to check the accuracy of incoming mail.
10 After reading a short story to your child, ask him/her to describe the main character.	**11** Have your child use food advertisements to find out how much a children's party at home would cost.	**12** Using a TV Guide, have your child classify programs as fiction or non-fiction.	**13** After peeling an orange, have your child arrange the sections to illustrate 1/2, 1/3, and 1/4.	**14** Have your child write a thank-you note to someone who was nice to him/her this week.	**15*** Ask your child to solve the following problems. 5,278 x 4 7,492 x 6	**16*** Have your child subtract his/her birth year from 2,000 to find out how old he/she will be at the turn of the century.
17* Write a letter to a friend, leaving out all punctuation. Have your child fill in the correct punctuation marks.	**18*** Ask: "If we need two tablespoons of sugar to make one quart of lemonade, how much sugar would we need to make a gallon?"	**19** Ask your child to start a personal dictionary by writing new words and their meanings in a notebook.	**20*** Ask: "Which is the better buy, five pounds of potatoes for forty cents or ten pounds for seventy-five cents?"	**21** Ask your child to take an imaginary vacation on the moon. Ask: "What should you take with you?"	**22** Have your child use greater than (>), less than (<), or equal to (=) to complete this equation. (6x5)+5 ( ) (9x5)+2	**23*** Tell your child that a package of pencils costs 25¢ and a package of erasers costs 10¢. Ask: How much more will you spend on pencils?"
24 Ask your child to choose a game, then play it with him/her. **31** Help your child locate three or more facts about any two states.	**25*** Have your child solve the problems below. 86,098 + 46,743 + 64,359 96,031 + 78,546 + 34,450	**26*** Ask your child to cut a peanut butter sandwich into four equal parts and eat one part. Ask: "What fractional part remains to be eaten?"	**27*** Ask: "How much change would you receive if you paid for seventeen dollars and forty cents worth of groceries with a twenty-dollar bill?"	**28*** Using a local or "Neighbors" section of the newspaper, ask your child to choose and read an article and then tell about the main idea of that article.	**29** Have your child read a newspaper story. Ask him/her: "What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen?"	**30*** While grocery shopping, have your child figure out how much more one can of food costs than another.

SOURCE: Dade Partners, Dade County, Florida

— to recognize and explore issues relevant to the Atlanta Public Schools
— where appropriate, to develop policy statements on issues affecting Atlanta Public Schools.

Perhaps the most visible advocacy effort of APPLE Corps is its annual monitoring of the school district budget process. Since 1980, the board of education has held public hearings on the budget process. In cooperation with the League of Women Voters, APPLE Corps conducts a parent workshop to explain the budget process.

The organization also develops and distributes *A Citizen's Handbook and Academic Calendar for the Atlanta Public Schools*, which provides information on how the schools work, who to call for what, what goes on when, and what programs are available to students. Weekly calendar pages are interspersed with educational quotes and photos. *Schooltalk*, a monthly newsletter, provides citizens with summaries of board of education meetings, discussions, and actions. It also includes in-depth special feature reports.

Each year, five outstanding school volunteers receive GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS. The organization also awards teacher initiative grants and arts grants to promote creative classroom art instruction.

Parents Involved in Governance

South Carolina's School Improvement Councils

When the South Carolina legislature passed the Education Finance Act of 1977, one of the provisions required every public school to establish advisory councils consisting of parents, teachers, community members, and—at the secondary school level—students. The councils were seen as a way to give all members of the community an opportunity to participate in policy development and discuss practices to improve education in the state.

When the Education Improvement Act became law in 1984, the councils became school improvement councils. They were given additional responsibilities, including long-range planning and evaluation of the implementation of reforms.

Councils have five objectives:

— to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to determine school and student needs
— to assist the principal in establishing goals and objectives to meet identified needs
— to establish priorities to accomplish those needs
— to devise strategies, determine budgetary requirements, and establish time lines to accomplish the goals and objectives
— to assist the principal in writing the school improvement plan.

Council members are elected, but principals are authorized to appoint as many as one-third of the members to ensure that all segments of the community are represented. State law spells out a number of deadlines to ensure that the school improvement councils are involved throughout the school year. The first meeting, for example, must be held before November 8; a school improvement report must be ready for the board of education by March 1. The report also must be distributed to parents.

Ellen Henderson, director of public relations for the South Carolina School Boards Association, is a former member of the Lexington School District school improvement council. She notes that careful training of the members of the council—a state university provides such training—is important in making sure parents clearly understand their roles.

For example, parents must clearly understand that they do not establish policy, although they may help develop ways to implement policy. In addition, school improvement councils have responsibilities that extend to a single school, while boards of education are responsible for an entire school district.

One benefit of the program, Henderson believes, is that it encourages more parents to attend school board meetings. "They develop a greater awareness of the complexities of a school board's responsibilities." In many cases, school improvement councils are serving as training grounds for potential school board members, Henderson notes. ■

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL BOARD POLICY

Both parents and school boards are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of parent involvement programs. Districts are developing a variety of programs to foster relations between families and the schools.

For such programs to have any long-term effect, however, they must grow out of a school board policy that has been carefully planned, clearly communicated, and consistently evaluated. This summary chapter outlines some of the considerations for school boards as they work to enhance parent involvement in their own schools.

Step 1: Assess Current Policies and Needs

Review current policies that may affect parent involvement in your district's schools. Look at both successful and unsuccessful parent involvement programs. Why are some programs working?

Ask for parent input in this process. Work with local PTA leaders, for example, to find out what school district policies and practices hinder the participation of parents in school activities. Be sure to involve a broad range of parents.

Assess district needs. What are school district goals? The New York State School Boards Association has developed a Policy and Practice Needs Assessment instrument that may be a valuable tool in your district's assessment procedure.

Once your district goals are clearly in mind, evaluate how effectively existing programs help achieve those goals. In Miami, for example, one district goal is to raise student scores on statewide achievement tests. As a result, activities on the parent calendars are specifically designed to reinforce skills that are tested. Parents know that they have a responsibility for helping their children be successful in the tests. Consider changing demographics as part of the planning process. How will changing population trends affect existing programs? What new programs may the board need to develop?

Step 2: Establish Board Policy and the Board's Commitment to that Policy

Follow a comprehensive process in drafting, developing, and adopting board policies on parent involvement. Allow many opportunities for parent and community input. Establish clear goals; consider a variety of alternative approaches to meeting those goals. For example, if a goal is "to ensure that parents know what their children are learning," possible strategies to meet the goal might include:

— improving information on report cards
— regular letters to parents
— providing funds to support evening teacher visits to children's homes
— an increase in formal communications, such as newsletters.

In some cases, the school district itself may not be the only institution that can effectively meet the need. For example, school districts that identify "increasing teacher knowledge about the importance of parent involvement in education" as a goal may consider:

- working through the state school boards association to change certification requirements to include a course on the educational impact of parent involvement in education
- working through the state school boards association with state colleges and universities to develop preservice and inservice curricula for teachers

Define roles for parents clearly. In some areas, school boards are prohibited by policy, contractual, or legal constraints from sharing any decision-making authority. In other areas, however, parent input may serve a valuable function. Examples of policy areas in which decision-making is increasingly being shared include:

— setting guidelines for community use of schools
— discussing budget priorities
— planning and evaluating extracurricular activities
— hiring school principals
— reviewing proposed new school programs.

Ann Kahn, former school board member and president of the National PTA, has seen parent involvement in decision-making from both sides. She points out that school boards are legally obligated to *make policy*. Parents, however, can have input during policy formulation and can participate in making decisions *within that policy*.

John Goodlad's *A Study of Schooling* outlines the kind of role most parents want to play in school decision-making:

> Polls and surveys shows that [parents] would like a greater say in the affairs of their schools. But

> this does not mean that parents want to take over the schools. Some do, but most don't. Rather, they want to be kept informed in as clear a fashion as possible, especially about their children's progress and welfare. Further, they want the decisions and those who make them to be visible. They would prefer to leave the running of the school to the principal, and the classrooms to teachers and, if possible, to hold them accountable. . . . Most would increase the decision-making role of parents, parent associations, and lay advisory councils. But they would not elevate their authority above the professional individuals and groups or the board.

Of course, not *all* parents agree with Goodlad's statement. Some activist parents want to serve not only in an advisory role, but to make policy themselves. Nonetheless, the latest Gallup Poll on Education and the 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey confirm that parents want increased *involvement*, but not increased *authority*.

Support policies with budgetary resources. Successful parent involvement programs require a substantial commitment from parents. The district should be willing to assume an equal responsibility for providing resources such as staff, training, or increased communication.

Affirm the board's commitment to the new policy both within and outside the school system.

Stress the benefits of parent involvement. Let parents, teachers, and the community know the goals of any program.

Step 3: Communicate the Policy

Understand the importance of communication. "Often school boards may think they can put off giving time and attention to their communication responsibilities, especially when the school system does not face a major crisis," said Nick Goble, assistant executive director of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. "However, major crises are often caused by a lack of communication."

Start by communicating the policy. . .and the board's commitment to it. . .to all school staff members. Previous chapters have shown that school administrators and teachers can be one of the greatest strengths of a parent involvement program—or one of its biggest obstacles. If inservice training is needed, provide financial support.

Use a variety of communication methods to let parents know about the new policy. Radio and television announcements, speeches to community organizations, flyers sent home from school, and even notices inserted in grocery bags are all possibilities.

Step 4: Develop a Plan to Implement the Policy

Assign specific responsibilities for implementing the program. Will a board committee be needed? How will local PTAs be involved? If additional staff or budget are needed, establish a plan for making them available.

Obtain materials from other parent involvement programs. If elements from an existing program can be adapted to your district's needs, the process of implementation will be faster and easier.

Establish priorities. In the beginning, for example, it may be helpful to ask parents to work on resolving immediate school problems, rather than long-standing issues. As parents experience success, they will be better able to examine longer-range concerns.

Step 5: Evaluate the Policy

Build in an evaluation component to any parent involvement program. The evaluation should be designed to determine how successful the program is in reaching its stated goals. Evaluation components might include:

- short questionnaires to all parents
- in-depth questionnaires to a sample of parents
- interviews with parents
- examination of achievement data
- reports from teachers and principals

Plan to review the policy at regular intervals. A task force of parents might be authorized to review the policy during its first year of implementation, for example.

Revise policy and programs regularly in light of evaluations. ■

APPENDIX A

Resources For School Board Members

Books and Reports

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ERIC Document Reproduction Service
3900 Wheeler Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22304
1-800/227-3742 (In Virginia 703/823-0500)

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APPENDIX B

Sample Policy Checklist

POLICY TOPICS PROMOTING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Do you have policies on these topics in your districts policy manual? If yes, should they be reviewed? If no, should you consider developing them? (You do not necessarily need a policy in every one of these areas; the list below is a guide to possible policy areas which *might* address parental involvement in your school system.)

	YES	REVIEW	NO	CONSIDER
FOUNDATIONS AND BASIC COMMITMENTS				
The People & Their School District	___	_____	___	_____
Community Involvement in Decision-Making	___	_____	___	_____
Educational Philosophy	___	_____	___	_____
School District Goals & Objectives	___	_____	___	_____
Commitment to Accomplishment	___	_____	___	_____
Accomplishment Reporting to the Public	___	_____	___	_____
Recognition for Accomplishment	___	_____	___	_____
SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS				
Board Organizational Meeting	___	_____	___	_____
Board Committees	___	_____	___	_____
School Board Meetings	___	_____	___	_____
Board Meeting Procedures	___	_____	___	_____
Board Policy Development	___	_____	___	_____
Preliminary Development of Policies	___	_____	___	_____
Policy Adoption	___	_____	___	_____
PERSONNEL				
Staff Involvement in Decision-Making	___	_____	___	_____
Staff Conduct	___	_____	___	_____
Staff Rights/Responsibilities	___	_____	___	_____
Staff Participation in Community Activities	___	_____	___	_____
Staff-Student Relations	___	_____	___	_____
INSTRUCTION				
Instructional Goals	___	_____	___	_____
Curriculum Development	___	_____	___	_____
Basic Instructional Program	___	_____	___	_____
Special Programs & Accommodations	___	_____	___	_____
Programs for Disadvantaged Students	___	_____	___	_____
Programs for Handicapped Students	___	_____	___	_____
Programs for Gifted Students	___	_____	___	_____
Programs for Pregnant Students	___	_____	___	_____
Bilingual Instruction	___	_____	___	_____
Extended Instructional Programs	___	_____	___	_____
Textbook Selection & Adoption	___	_____	___	_____
Supplementary Materials Selection & Adoption	___	_____	___	_____
Library Materials Selection & Adoption	___	_____	___	_____
School Volunteers	___	_____	___	_____
Academic Achievement	___	_____	___	_____
Parent Conferences	___	_____	___	_____

	YES	REVIEW	NO	CONSIDER
Student Progress Reports to Parents	___	_____	___	_____
Graduation Requirements	___	_____	___	_____
School Ceremonies & Observances	___	_____	___	_____
STUDENTS				
Equal Educational Opportunities	___	_____	___	_____
Student Attendance	___	_____	___	_____
School Admissions	___	_____	___	_____
Student Withdrawal from School	___	_____	___	_____
Student Absences and Excuses	___	_____	___	_____
Students Rights/Responsibilities	___	_____	___	_____
Student Complaints & Grievances	___	_____	___	_____
Student Discipline	___	_____	___	_____
Student Suspension & Expulsion	___	_____	___	_____
Student Welfare	___	_____	___	_____
Student Fees, Fines & Charges	___	_____	___	_____
Student Records	___	_____	___	_____
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS				
School-Community Relations Goals	___	_____	___	_____
School-Community Relations Priority Objectives	___	_____	___	_____
Public Information Program	___	_____	___	_____
Public's Right to Know	___	_____	___	_____
School-Sponsored Information Media	___	_____	___	_____
News Releases	___	_____	___	_____
Broadcasting & Taping of Board Meetings	___	_____	___	_____
Community Involvement in Decision-Making	___	_____	___	_____
Public Participation at Board Meetings	___	_____	___	_____
Community Instructional Resources	___	_____	___	_____
Community Use of School Facilities	___	_____	___	_____
Visitors to the Schools	___	_____	___	_____
Public Complaints	___	_____	___	_____
Public Complaints about Policies	___	_____	___	_____
Public Complaints about the Curriculum or Instructional Materials	___	_____	___	_____
Relations with Community Organizations	___	_____	___	_____
Relations with Parent Organizations	___	_____	___	_____
Relations with Booster Organizations	___	_____	___	_____
Relations with Churches	___	_____	___	_____
Relations with Youth Organizations	___	_____	___	_____
Relations with Business Organizations	___	_____	___	_____
Relations with Governmental Authorities	___	_____	___	_____

APPENDIX C

Parental Involvement: Some Sample Policies KMA-E

The sudden thrust toward involvement of parents in all aspects of school operations has met with varying degrees of support. Whatever the attitude of school officials who are faced with the implementation of parental involvement, the question is why, or at least, why not?

All educators are well aware of the ivory-tower stereotype that has sometimes characterized their profession. In the minds of many citizens, schools have traditionally been a hands-off domain. The public trusted the professional teachers; the teachers, in turn, felt competent and secure in their positions.

Suddenly there was a rash of publicity about how far American schools were behind those of other nations. Even more frightening were some of the statistics which indicated that many children simply weren't learning.

As researchers attempted to determine why children were—or were not—learning, they hit upon a number of variables: poor preparation for school, lack of motivation, irrelevancy, high teacher-pupil ratios, and so forth. There was no single reason, or single answer.

But the researchers also discovered some positive indicators of academic achievement, some things that seemed to contribute to success in school. Among these was parental involvement.

The partnership that should exists between home and school can have many facets—and many benefits. Traditionally such groups as Parent-Teacher Associations and Home and School Associations offered support, both financial and moral, to individual schools. Today many parents are beginning to take a more active role in the school system. Some are employed as officeworkers or teacher aides. Others volunteer their services, to help in the classroom, correct papers, or supervise lunch-room or playground activities. Such help lowers the pupil-teacher ratio, thus providing for more individualized attention, and also frees teachers for better planning. Some parents take the cause of the schools to the public forum, campaigning for a seat on the local school board or urging support of a bond referendum.

Whatever type of parental invovlement exists, the end result should be furthering the educational opportunities and achievement of the children. This is possible because parents have such an indepth and long-term knowledge of their children—their strengths and weaknesses, their needs, and their problems. The exchange of such information, with trained professionals, can help educators in planning a better, more relevant, school program.

There is a subsidiary asset of parental involvement, one which deals with the age-old problem of motivation. As children see their own parents more involved in school affairs, they will be encouraged to take a more active interest in school. They will have less opportunity for playing home against school and vice versa.

SOURCE: Parental Involvement in Title I ESEA, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1972

The following are samples of school district policies that illustrate how parent involvement can be built into various school district policy areas.

School District Goals and Objectives

AE

The goal of the Horseheads Central School District is to accept responsibility for the development of each child into an adult who can stand confidently, participate fully, learn continually, and contribute meaningfully to our world.

Six objectives which contribute to the achievement of this goal, listed without priority in arrangement, define desirable outcomes to be incorporated into short- and long-range plans for the school system.

1. To insure that each student develops proficiency in basic academic skills.
2. To insure that each student develops the capacity to recognize and cope with the problems of an unknown future
3. To insure the development of meaningful interpersonal relationships among students, staff, and community
4. To insure that staff, students, and parents are afforded maximum feasible participation in the development and evaluation of programs and policies that meet the educational needs of each community
5. To insure maximum efficiency in the allocation of material resources
6. To insure maximum efficiency in the allocation of human resources.

Date of Manual Adoption
Horseheads Central School District, Horseheads, N.Y.

Policy Development

BF

The board considers policy development its chief function. The board will exercise its leadership in the operation of the school by developing and adopting written policies to serve as guidelines and goals for the successful and efficient functioning of the school. Written policies are guides for the discretionary action of those to whom they delegate authority and as a source of information and guidance for all those who are interested in, and affected by, the district schools.

In formulating policy the board will consult with personnel, students, parents or community leaders who may be affected by the policy or who may request input into the development of the policy. The final responsibility for the drafting, development and adoption of the policy shall rest with the board.

The board will annually study and evaluate the written policies and the reports concerning the execution of its written policies to determine the adequacy and effectiveness of those policies. Changes in needs, conditions, purposes and objectives will require revisions, deletions and additions to the policies of present and future boards.

The formal adopting of the policies will be recorded in the minutes of the board. Only those written statements so adopted and so recorded shall be regarded as official board policy.

SOURCE: South Carolina School Boards Association Policy Reference Manual Constitutional and Statutory Provisions:

A. State Board of Education Regulations:
   1. R-43-150 — Policy development.

40

Board Policy Development BF

It is the intent of the Audubon school board to develop policies and put them in writing so that they may serve as guidelines and goals for the successful and efficient functioning of the Audubon Public Schools.

The board considers policy development its chief function, along with providing the wherewithal such as personnel, buildings, materials, and equipment for the successful administration, application, and execution of its policies.

It is the board's intention that its policies serve as sources of information and guidance for all people who are interested in or connected with the Audubon Public Schools.

The policies of the Audubon School board are framed, and are meant to be interpreted, in terms of New Jersey laws, rules and regulations of the state board of education, and all other regulatory agencies within our local, county, state, and federal levels of government. The policies also are framed, and are meant to be interpreted, in terms of those educational objectives, procedures, and practices which are broadly accepted by leaders and authorities in the public education field.

Changes in needs, conditions, purposes, and objectives will require revisions, deletions, and additions to the policies of present and future boards. The board will welcome suggestions for ongoing policy development.

The board, representing the people of the district, is the legislative body which determines all questions of general policy to be employed in the conduct of the public schools.

Proposals regarding school district policies and operations may originate at any of several sources: a parent, a student, a taxpayer, a professional employee, a member of the board, a clerk, the superintendent, a professional consultant, a civic group, and so on. Action on such proposals will be taken by the policy committee of the board of education. The development of the policy statement shall be the responsibility of the policy committee with final adoption in accordance with board policy BFC POLICY ADOPTION.

Date of Manual Adoption
Audubon Public Schools, Audubon, New Jersey

Staff Ethics GBC

1. **Responsibility to the pupil and parent:** The welfare of the pupil is the first consideration of the teacher. The teacher guides the pupil in his/her growth toward maturity, in the preparation to be socially and economically competent in the school, the home, and the community, and to be happy as a responsible member of society. The teacher recognizes the concern of the parent for the child's development and seeks to share this responsibility and to cooperate with the home for the best interests of the child.
   a. The teacher deals kindly and justly with every child as an individual without prejudice or partiality.
   b. The teacher respects the confidence of his/her pupil; information given in confidence should be passed on only to authorized persons or agencies that are attempting to aid the pupil.
   c. The teacher respects the basic responsibility of parents for their children, seeks to establish friendly and cooperative relationships with the home, and is discreet with information received from parents.
   d. The teacher does not use classroom privileges and prestige to promote personal gain, selfish interests, partisan politics, or sectarian religious views.
   e. The teacher strives to help each pupil develop sound moral, spiritual, and intellectual foundations.
   f. The teacher strengthens the democratic activities of the school; the teacher shows all pupils that American citizenship involves responsibilities as well as privileges.
   g. The teacher accepts no remuneration, directly or indirectly, for tutoring or equipping members of his/her own classes.
   h. Remembering that the teacher's primary responsibility is the pupil, the teacher seeks peaceful means for the achievement of professional objectives.

49

2. **Responsibility to the profession:** The teacher maintains a constructive and cordial attitude toward his/her associates. The teacher respects the authority attached to each associate's position and extends the recognition due to fellow professionals. He/she helps to improve the status of the profession by developing and maintaining high standards. He/she is aware of the values of professional organizations and works for their realization.

   a. The teacher endorses the principle that the profession must accept responsibility for the conduct of its members and understands that each teacher's conduct will be regarded as representative of the profession.
   b. The teacher maintains an attitude and personal appearance which strengthen public respect for the teaching profession and for the school system of which he/she is a part.
   c. The teacher adheres to the conditions of a contract until the contract has been terminated by mutual consent, or has otherwise been legally terminated.
   d. The teacher exercises his/her right to participate in the democratic processes which determine school policy. Once policy is determined, the teacher supports it. The teacher recognizes that the Board of Education, which derives its authority from the people it serves, has placed the responsibility for administration of school policy in the hands of the administrators of the schools.
   e. The teacher conducts school affairs through recognized channels of the school system or the profession.
   f. The teacher is considerate and loyal in his/her relationships with fellow teachers and takes pride in their achievements.
   g. The teacher respects the confidence of fellow teachers.
   h. The teacher regards criticism of fellow teachers or of a predecessor as unprofessional; any criticism or dispute among teachers in the presence of pupils or laypersons as unjustifiable.
   i. The teacher reports to duly constituted authority any matters which involve the best interests of the school.
   j. The teacher seeks continued professional growth and efficiency.
   k. The teacher maintains active membership in professional organizations and works through them to attain the objectives which will advance the status of the profession.
   l. The teacher considers only educational values and qualifications in making suggestions or recommendations regarding school purchases or personnel appointments; rejects compensation or rewards from persons benefited.
   m. The teacher seeks appointments or promotions only on the basis of professional qualifications; he/she does not apply for a specific position while it is held by a qualified member of the profession.
   n. The teacher requests honest recommendations for himself-herself; he/she gives honest recommendations for others.

3. **Responsibility to the public:** The teacher holds a position of public trust. He/she serves as a trustee of the American heritage, and works for the strengthening of education and for the realization of democratic ideals.

   a. The teacher strives to keep the public informed about and interested in the educational program of the public schools.
   b. The teacher performs the duties of citizenship and participates in community activities within limits imposed by obligations to his/her pupils.

Date of Manual Adoption
Milford Exempted School District, Milford, Ohio

Student Progress Reports

IKAB

The Board recognizes the school's obligation to provide periodic progress reports of a student's progress. The Board further recognizes that progress reports are a vital form of communication between teachers and students, schools and parents.

The Board of Directors supports staff efforts in finding better ways to measure and report student progress. The Board, however, requires that:

a. Parents be informed at least three times a year, as to the progress their children are making in school. Additional reports, especially positive comments regarding student achievement and behavior, are strongly encouraged as they occur.
b. Parents will be notified in writing and conferred with as soon as possible when a child's performance or attitude is unsatisfactory, or shows signficant deterioration.
c. Distinctions will be reported between a student's attitude and academic performance.
d. At comparable levels, the school system will strive for consistency in grading and reporting, except as this is inappropriate for certain classes or certain students.
e. When no grades are given, but the student is evaluated descriptively, the school staff should provide a realistic appraisal of the student's standing in relationship to peers.
f. When grades are given, the meaning of any marks or symbols will be explained.
g. Group parent orientations will be held at a school or PTSA function early in the fall to allow the school staff an opportunity to present the class objectives, to give an overview of the year's work, and to introduce learning materials.
h. Individual conferences will be held with parents of children in grades K-6 by mid-November. The conference should be person-to-person at school or at home. A telephone conference may be used in exceptional situations.
i. When grades are used, the letter grade "A" will represent outstanding work; the grade "B" will represent better than average work; the grade "C" will represent average work; the grade "D" will represent below average work; and the grade "E" or "F" will represent unsatisfactory (failing) work. Even though it may be difficult to establish the quality of letter grades and the methods used in arriving at a grade, there must be appropriate justification for the grades given and there must be a record which reveals how the teacher arrived at the determination of the grade.
j. Appropriate documentation of progress reports, report cards and individual conferences will be maintained in the student's file.
k. The Board authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to develop progress report forms, report cards and the necessary regulations to implement and administer this policy.

Date of Manual Adoption
Tacoma School District No. 10, Tacoma, Washington

51

Student Progress Reports to Parents IKAB

The Westfield School Committee regards the following principles as the key to an effective system of student progress reporting.

1. Parents are entitled to a maximum amount of information concerning the progress of their child.
2. This information shall emphasize the positive aspects of a child's progress in school indicating, therefore, what he has accomplished. Every effort shall be made to prevent progress reporting from being punitive in nature.
3. Parent-teacher conferences are considered extremely important to both the teacher and the parent and must take place on a regularly scheduled basis. Special additional parent-teacher conferences should be scheduled as the need exists.
4. Parents shall, upon request, be provided with an explanation of the source of difficulties and level of achievements of their child in school.
5. Progress reporting must be based upon a child's placement in relation to an established set of educational objectives.

Date of Manual Adoption
Westfield Public Schools, Westfield, Massachusetts

Selection and Adoption of Textbooks IIAA

In adopting textbooks for use in the Jefferson County School System, the Board must carefully consider the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of students, parents, and teachers.

The Board's first commitment in selecting and adopting textbooks shall be the preservation of the students' right to learn in an atmosphere of academic freedom. Secondly, the Board shall support the teachers' right to exercise professional judgment in their work; but, at the same time, shall require teachers to balance this right with an awareness of their responsibility to meet the educational goals and objectives of the community they serve.

Thirdly, the Board shall recognize the rights of parents to influence the education of their children. The Board shall not, however, allow the wishes of an individual parent to infringe upon the rights of the majority of the students in any class in the county school system.

In order to maintain this balance of rights, responsibilities, and freedoms, it shall be the policy of the Board to involve students, parents, and teachers in the textbook selection process. A textbook committee made up of representatives from each group shall review for possible recommendation copies of books from the State Department of Education multiple list of textbooks and copies of books from other sources, provided such books have instructional value compatible with excellence in education.

A list of books suitable for adoption will be compiled by the committee. The First Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction will receive a recommendation from the committee and if he concurs will add his recommendation through the Board's committee system. Books which are taken from other sources besides the state-approved textbook list shall, in accordance with Public School Law (Title 52, Section 433, Paragraph 12, Alabama Code) upon the recommendation of the superintendent, also be considered for adoption by the Board.

After Board approval, the superintendent shall forward to the State Department of Education a complete list of the books adopted.

Date of Manual Adoption
Jefferson County School System, Birmingham, Alabama

52

Student Rights and Responsibilities JF

The privileges and rights of all students will be guaranteed without regard to race, religion, handicap, sex, creed, or national origin.

Students will have the right to advocate change of any law, policy, or rule. Students may exercise their right to freedom of expression through speech, petition, and other lawful and orderly means. The exercise of the right may not interfere with the rights of others. Freedom of expression may not be used to present material or actions which tend to be obscene or slanderous, or to defame character, or to advocate violation of federal, state, and local laws, or official school policies, rules, and regulations.

Students may present complaints to teachers or administration officials in an orderly fashion.

Every member of the school community, including students, parents, and school staff, has the responsibility to promote regular attendance at school, orderly conduct and behavior, freedom from fear of insult or injury, and maximum opportunities for learning on the part of each student.

Date of Manual Adoption
Winneconne Community School District, Winneconne, Wisconsin

Communications with the Home KA

In order to provide for continuous communication between the home and the school:

1. The Supervisor of Public Relations will develop and disseminate on a regular basis to the community-at-large publications containing articles of note about the school district.

2. The Supervisor of Public Relations will utilize the news media to disseminate information about the school district which is especially timely or well suited for mass distribution.

3. The principal of each school shall communicate with the parents of the school on a regular basis by sending home information about the activities of the school.

4. The principal of the school shall cooperate with the parent/teacher association or parent/teacher organization for the purpose of advising the group about the activities of the school.

5. Parent/teacher conferences shall be conducted as determined by the officially adopted school year calendar.

Date of Manual Adoption
Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, Colorado

Relations With Booster Organizations KMB

Some of the strongest school support comes from parents or organizations having a strong interest in a specific student or school activity. Support from booster organizations should be encouraged wherever appropriate as a means of involving the public in the activities and goals of the school district. Principals and teachers shall seek to strengthen and support booster organizations by cooperating in any way possible to provide assistance, materials, facilities, or other aid to assist them in helping the schools.

Principals will maintain close communication with booster organizations to ensure harmony with the policies and goals of the school district. Principals shall assume responsibility for the conduct of any organization approved by such principal for interaction with the students, staff or program of his or her school.

Date of Manual Adoption
Horseheads Central School District, Horseheads, New York

Relations With Parents Organizations

KMA

The Board endorses the creation of parents organizations such as PTA (Parent Teacher Association) and PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) units and Local School Advisory Councils as appropriate means of achieving effective and maximum feasible involvement of parents and guardians of students in the affairs of our schools. The Board expects all staff members to work closely and in harmony with the officers and directors of all parents organizations in pursuit of the following goals:

1. To involve parents and school personnel in a cooperative and sustained system of activities which will increase the educational opportunities of the children both in school and at home.

2. To improve school-home relationships by enabling parents and school personnel to (a) define their relationship to each other; (b) define their roles as they pertain to the children served by the schools; and (c) identify family needs and resources, including those of community, as well as school needs and resources.

3. To provide teachers and administrators with opinions and viewpoints that will lead to a better analysis of the needs of students and more relevant program planning.

4. To sustain parental interest through a program of training and consultative services.

5. To develop the skills needed by school personnel to function effectively in a working relationship with parents and other community members.

Date of Manual Adoption
Jefferson County School District R-1, Lakewood, Colorado

Parent Conferences

IKAD

Close communication between home and school is an important factor in establishing a highly effective school program. Planned conferences between parents and teachers is an important way to bring about understanding and close cooperation between the home and school. Close communication should be maintained through conference with all parents, not just with those where academic or other problems suggest the need for closer communication.

Conferences between parents and teachers regarding a child should be treated by the teacher as an opportunity to help the child and every effort should be made to make the conference constructive, objective and pleasant. Conferences should provide an opportunity for a mutual exchange of information and ideas for the welfare of the child.

Occasionally parents will call on teachers when they have responsibilities for class instruction. Although the purpose of such a visit may be worthy, teachers should discourage the practice and suggest that the parent arrange for conferences outside of regular school time. Teachers should be prepared to give after-school or pre-school time for conferences when desirable.

In grades 1-6, one planned parent-teacher conference for each child is scheduled each year. These are arranged for certain days when classes are scheduled early and conferences are held during the afternoon. In addition to this annual conference, teachers are expected to request additional conferences with parents as the needs may indicate.

The principal or supervisor should be present at any parent-teacher conference when there is reason to anticipate an atmosphere of hostility.

Date of Manual Adoption
Haddon Heights Board of Education, Haddon Heights, New Jersey

Translation of District Written Communications to Public

The Board of Trustees recognizes that parents and pupils whose primary home language is other than English can feel estranged from the school because of an inability to fully interpret and understand the communications when prepared in English only. As a result, these parents may feel reluctant to participate in the educational offerings of the school intended to serve them.

While it is recognized that translating community oriented materials into another language other than English is but one aspect of community relations, it is an important aspect, and one which will have the purpose of:

1. Informing non-English speaking parents about District Programs, activities, and philosophies so that they might better understand, and become more involved in the educational process.

2. Improving relationships with the minority communities through more thorough channels of communication.

3. Establishing a District-wide guide for attempting to communicate with all of its parents, even if the communication sent to them must be translated into a language other than English.

In an affirmative effort to provide all parents and pupils of the communities served by the District an opportunity to be equally informed about the school and its activities, the Board shall, when fifteen (15) percent or more of any individual school's pupils speak a primary language other than English, require all documents sent to the parents of these pupils be written in both English and the primary language.

Nothing herein shall prevent the Superintendent or designee from providing translation services to parents and pupils when less than fifteen (15) percent of an individual school's pupils and parents will be better served by providing such service.

Date of Manual Adoption
Ontario-Montclair School District, Ontario, California

LEGAL REF.: California Education Code: 10925 Bilingual Parent Notices

ABOUT NSBA . . .

The National School Boards Association is located in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area in colonial Alexandria, Virginia. NSBA is a not-for-profit organization whose primary mission is the general advancement of education through the unique North American tradition of local citizen control. In this way, public elementary and secondary school policy is decided by the nation's 97,000 local school board members, who are accountable to the community either directly (97% are elected) or indirectly through appointment by elected officials. NSBA promotes the betterment of the public elementary and secondary schools through services to state school boards associations and more than 15,300 local school boards; by maintaining liaison with other education organizations and governmental authorities; and by increasing school board impact on federal education laws and regulations.

Federation Members of NSBA are the 49 state school boards associations, the Hawaii State Board of Education, plus the boards of education in the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. About 2,000 local district school boards, which are members in good standing of their state associations, are NSBA Direct Affiliates.

NSBA represents the interests of school boards before Congress; provides development programs for school board members; provides school district management services; and offers to the school board movement a variety of other services, including an annual convention.

The NSBA Federal Relations Network, composed of up to three school board members in each congressional district, plays a major role in NSBA's education advocacy program in Washington, D.C.

The award-winning monthly magazine, **The American School Board Journal**, has been owned and published by NSBA since 1967. Publication of another monthly magazine, **The Executive Educator**, began in 1979, and a fortnightly newspaper, **School Board News**, began in 1981.

Seven component groups within the Federation play a significant role in National School Boards Association activities to serve Federation Members and school board needs:

- The Council of Urban Boards of Education serves the special needs of urban school boards.
- The Large District Forum focuses on the needs of major non-urban school districts.
- The Rural District Forum serves the special needs of rural school board leaders.
- The Council of School Attorneys focuses on issues of school law.
- The Federation Member Executive Directors' NSBA Liaison Committee serves as a forum for top staff administrators of the state associations and NSBA.
- The Conference of School Boards Association Communicators is composed of Federation Member and NSBA communications professionals.
- The Federal Policy Coordinators' Network focuses on administration of federally funded programs.

NSBA also maintains close liaison with other groups, including the National Caucus of Black School Board Members, National Caucus of Hispanic School Board Members, National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), American Association of School Administrators (AASA), National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and Education Commission of the States (ECS), to mention but a few nationwide organizations influencing education in the U.S.

NSBA policy is determined by a 150-member Delegate Assembly composed of active school board members from across the country. Translating this policy into action programs is a Board of Directors consisting of 21 members and three ex-officio members. The executive director administers NSBA programs, assisted by a professional staff. ■

NSBA

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